

BLACK CRUSADE™

THE TOME OF DECAY™



A SOURCEBOOK FOR
FOLLOWERS OF NURGLE

WARHAMMER®
40,000
ROLEPLAY

BLACK CRUSADE™

THE TOME OF DECAY™



ROLEPLAYING IN THE GRIM DARKNESS
OF THE 41ST MILLENNIUM

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INTRODUCTION

"Through his blessings, death itself is stayed. In his embrace, there is only affection and love. Let us share his munificence with those still ignorant of our cherished Grandfather; lest they perish before knowing his generosity."

—Pox Magister Effluvias Plo,
before the Putrefaction of Hive Kappax

To live is to eventually die, the inescapable fact of all mortal life. Almost all of those aware of their lives fear and dread this final end, which echoes the collapse of all order into disorder through remorseless entropy. Many strive to avoid such a fate, and are willing to perform any deed or suffer any woe to keep death from their door, if only for one more day. This is perhaps futile, but can attract the attention of one who represents both ruin and the struggle against it that typifies all life. For wherever there is life, there is decay—and where there is decay, there is Nurgle.

Nurgle represents this seemingly contradictory state of both loathsome decay and energetic struggle. Despite embodying entropy and the foulest of appearances, he and his Daemons are filled with vitality. All enthusiastically offer their gifts of ruinous diseases to both the lowly and powerful, for Nurgle embraces all to his loathsome bosom. They delight in sharing these blessings to mortals, offering escape from the horrors of death but at the price of utter corruption to their flesh. None are beneath his notice, from the smallest of underhive hovels to the most lordly of sectors. Each new disease, each new mortal brought low, is carefully recorded in a never-ending tally of his loving beneficence. Nurgle exists everywhere, for all living things erode and fail, and with each fall his power grows.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

THE **TOME OF DECAY** is the fourth and last book examining the dark secrets and foul plots of the four Chaos powers and their role in the **BLACK CRUSADE** roleplaying game. It is devoted to Nurgle, the Lord of Pestilence, and those who follow him. He is the god of blight and decay, yet also one of boundless energy. In many ways, Nurgle personifies a struggle against death, as despite the terrible diseased and decayed state of his followers, they resist actual death and injury to unnatural degrees. Heretics also learn more of the other fate that can await them, should they prove worthy: Apotheosis to the elevated rank of immortal Daemon Prince. With such power comes the need for even greater power, and Heretics can learn how to launch Black Crusades to burn the galaxy and depose the False Emperor.

CHAPTER I: NURGLE

This chapter covers the Grandfather of Decay, the Master of Plagues. From his pestilent garden within the Warp, where carrion-flowers sway in the polluted breezes and horrid fungi sprout from rotting corpses, he lovingly concocts new afflictions. His Daemons emerge forth to bring his gifts to mortals across the galaxy, for Nurgle is a generous god who rejoices with each successful plague. Billions fall to his carefully-wrought endeavours, even as the truly appreciative turn to him seeking power through his gifts. His apostles are often shambles of

putrefying flesh and dripping sores, but with unnaturally resilient bodies that vigorously resists final death even as they bring it to those who reject Nurgle's offerings. Just as all life falls to decay, so do those who oppose the Lord of Flies fall to his children.

CHAPTER II: DEATH BRINGERS

In this chapter, Heretics can find six new Archetypes worthy of the Lord of Ruin: Plague Marine, Veteran of the Long War, Warpsmith, Writhing World Sorcerer-King, Death Priest of Mire, and Plaguemeister. They can also discover new corrupted blessings from Grandfather Nurgle, as well as new rules for Daemonic Possession, Daemon Engines, and powerful mutations suitable for newly ascended Daemon Princes.

CHAPTER III: LORDS OF ENTROPY

Here players find new rules for Apotheosis to Daemonhood, allowing them to continue playing their characters after reaching the highest levels of Infamy and Corruption as the mightiest of their god's followers. They can also lead Black Crusades against the hated Imperium. This chapter also contains new details on pestilent worlds within the Screaming Vortex that the Heretics might conquer or ally with in their quest for power, such as the worm-ridden Writhing World, foetid Mire, and murderous Guelph.

CHAPTER IV: THE HEART OF THE VORTEX

This adventure takes the Heretics through the challenge of gaining access to the Lower Vortex, and a mind-bending confrontation with the incomprehensible forces within. Calling on the events from the previous three Tomes, it allows Game Masters to run all four adventures as a complete campaign. If the Heretics survive, they have the chance to rise to Daemonhood, as well as an opportunity to reach the Ascendent Spiral and rise out of the Screaming Vortex.

NPC PROFILES

In the cases of all NPC profiles, the GM should assume that they are proficient in any weapon they are equipped with. In addition, all NPC weapon profiles have any damage bonuses from Talents, Strength Bonus, cybernetics, or other augmentations included.

INFAMY FOR NPCs

Certain dangerous and powerful NPCs possess Infamy, representing their particularly potent abilities and dread reputations. An NPC with Infamy has Infamy Points equal to his Infamy Bonus, that may be used as if they were Infamy Points at CP Level 2 (21-60 Corruption Points).



NURGLE

INEVITABLE DECAY

•
THE GARDEN
OF NURGLE

•
SERVANTS OF THE
GREAT PARADOX

•
THE
COUNTLESS ILLS

•
NURGLE AND
THE LONG WAR



CHAPTER I: NURGLE

"Rejoice, children! Your Father brings you hope in your darkest hour. Let those who would accept his gifts come forth and receive the blessings of the Lord of Decay. Cast away your crutches and doubts. Put aside beliefs in a false master who fills your hearts with lies, sorrow, and regrets. Embrace instead the glorious gifts of rot and decay. Revel in the beauty of putrescence and be reborn a living symbol of perseverance."

—The Daemon Prince Gal'furch, addressing the diseased inhabitants of the conquered city of Kulis VII

In every corner of a cold and uncaring galaxy, billions die each day. Wars consume entire systems, drowning civilisations in the blood of their own people. Conceit and avarice drain populations of their riches and their futures for the benefit of a few. Broken promises, deceit, and betrayal topple regimes, sacrificing the lives of those who served them so that the twisted plans of new rulers can come to fruition. In the wake of such tragedies, suffering, and misery, pain and disease touch the minds and bodies of the survivors and cause them to despair. These are the truths of existence in the mortal realm, and the breath that speaks these truths is the same breath that gives life to the malevolent inhabitants of another domain—the Realm of Chaos.

Of all the malign influences foisted upon the mortal realm, only one can be said to genuinely carry with it that singular commodity unlike any other in a bleak and forlorn existence—hope. Only the gifts of Nurgle, the Plaguefather, offer their recipients the chance to become greater in the face of unavoidable diminishment. Through Nurgle and his rancid visitations, a soul can find renewed purpose and the will to raise its face to the heavens, stare back into the void of dissolution and reclaim a life worth living. Endings are new beginnings, and Nurgle offers both in abundance.

INEVITABLE DECAY

"Entropy is all-consuming, fed by all struggles against it. Thus, even to hope is to despair. So despair, and in your desperation, find purpose."

—Zlans the Wracked, Speaker of Rot

There is nothing in all of creation that does not decay. No civilisation forever endures the machinations of its rivals. No king survives the plotting of his enemies. No life avoids decay. Not even the False Emperor, with all his deluded sacrificial supplicants and thousands of attending Tech-Priests, will elude the ravages of time and his eventual demise. The question is what happens when the end comes. Nurgle is the answer to that question.

Each inevitable ending brings with it an equally certain start to something new. When a Catachan Spiker traps and consumes a careless Guardsman, the life of the soldier ends and a new Spiker grows. Rotted flesh that sloughs from the arm of a diseased underhive ganger is left in the sewers to feed the plague-rats that scrape out a miserable existence in those dark, maggot-filled tunnels. Even a Rogue Trader whose contract is terminated must seek out new avenues for commerce. There is no ending that does not result in the hope of renewal.

It is because of this inescapable fact of life that Nurgle is known to many as the Lord of All, for there is nothing that transpires anywhere that does not serve his ends. Truly there is no being, no action or outcome that does not further Nurgle's aims. In truth, Nurgle could simply sit back and wait for the universe to unfold according to his design. He is not content, however, to wait. He has too much energy, too much enthusiasm for his work to just sit idly by. From deep within his manse he brews contagion, both physical plagues and virulent ideas, that he and his followers then unleash upon the mortal realm. He welcomes the resistance of those who attempt to deny him, for each time they erect defences against his advances, he learns new ways to circumvent the opposition. Each cure breeds a newer, more powerful disease. Every victory for his enemies is pyrrhic, coming at a cost so great that it leaves the defenders open to the tender predations of Nurgle's ever-evolving poxes. This is the nature of Nurgle. Resistance is self-defeating. Change is a delay, nothing more. Running and denial only buy time at a cost of suffering, and time has no meaning in the Realm of Chaos.

Records of the many races of the galaxy often say that Nurgle corrupts, that he brings ruination to all. To a small extent, they are correct, but their evaluation is narrow in scope and fails to grasp the greater truth. The more primitive races have a much better understanding of the undeniable nature of the Master of Certitude. Life is struggle and erosion. To face the dawn is to await the dusk and, in turn, to endure the night. On a grander scale, if a being had the luxury of observing the rise and fall of empires, of seeing the birth of suns and their eventual collapse into swirling masses of cosmic destruction, the observer would surely recognize the rightful place of Nurgle as the Shepherd of Destiny.

I: NURGLE

FINAL ENTRY, JOURNAL OF CONFESSOR ALEHIR GHENT

THERE, CARVED INTO THE WOOD OF THE PEW, IN THE CHAPEL OF THE EMPEROR'S CREED IT WAS. THE MARK. THREE ENDLESS CIRCLES. DEATH. DECAY. REBIRTH. HORRID, INESCAPABLE, ETERNAL. THE WRETCHED TRUTH OF EXISTENCE Laid BARE IN THREE SMALL CIRCLES, CUT INTO ROTTING WOOD WITH RUSTED NAIL.

OF THE ACOLYTES WHO SAW IT, ONLY I PERSIST STILL. THE OTHERS STRUGGLED AGAINST THE SPREADING ROT, AND THEY SUCCUMBED. OH, OUR MASTER ORDERED THE CHURCH BURNED, THE CITY CLEANSSED, THE WORLD QUARANTINED, BUT IT WAS FAR TOO LATE. THE ROT HAD TAKEN HOLD, AND NOW ALL THAT REMAINED WAS TO ACCEPT IT. ONLY I SAW THAT REALITY, THAT INEVITABILITY. THE OTHERS DIED, CHOKED BY FLIES, THEIR FLESH SLOUGHING FROM THEIR BODIES, THEIR BONES MADE THE MEAL OF WORMS.

BUT I PERSISTED. AND THEN I SAW THE PATH. THE SYMBOL ON THAT NOW-DEAD WORLD SHOWED ME. TO THE VORTEX IT BECKONS...



It is only Nurgle's fondness for rot, for disease and decay, that prevents more from accepting his truth. It can be difficult for a mortal to accept that the rotting of a limb or the expulsion of his entrails is a blessing. Yet it is so. Even the decrepit Emperor of Man, ensconced in his Golden Throne, sits as a testament to Nurgle's greatness. Each day a thousand souls give their fleshy bodies and immortal souls to this false idol in a vain attempt to preserve his rotting presence. It is a losing battle, but the ammunition spent in the conflict, the human bodies sent to their wasted doom, does indeed serve a purpose—Nurgle's purpose. Each mortal that falls begets new life and new hope. This is the trade in which Nurgle traffics. Flesh is the coin of his realm, and hopes are the interest he pays on the investments made.

Truly, Nurgle embodies the nature of all things, and thus earns his honorific as the Lord of All.

IMPARTING HOPE TO A HOPELESS EXISTENCE

Life within the Screaming Vortex, or for that matter anywhere else in the unfeeling galaxy, is harsh, miserable, and full of pain and suffering. Service to an uncaring God-Emperor or an eldritch and absent cosmic deity is ultimately empty and devoid of meaning. Men live and die, and for what? For others to stand on their graves and proselytise? Where is the reward in that? For those who accept the boundless gifts of the Father of Plagues, everlasting hope is the ultimate reward.

Decay is unavoidable. Boltguns rust, the shells they fire are spent, and the fingers that pull their triggers wear down with the passing of time and repeated action. Over the course of their lives, mortals sustain injuries, become infected, sicken

and succumb to their wounds or, more simply, to age. It is impossible to escape deterioration, and yet people try. The struggle to forestall decay moves people to action. It motivates them to greatness. It gives them hope that better times lie ahead; endless possibilities in a universe that seemingly knows only certain crushing doom. It is the Plague Lord that brings light to the darkness. It is Nurgle that gives weak mortals the strength to resist the lies of the Ecclesiarchy and others. It is the Embracing Grandfather who encourages his followers to defy the doom of mortal corruption, and instead use it as a source of strength and inspiration.

In the market squares of backward planets and in the drone-filled cathedrals of the chapters of the Adeptus Ministorum, preachers spew their lies upon an unsuspecting and dim-witted flock. They warn against corruption of the soul and filth of the spirit. They admonish their listeners that to turn from their faith is to join the ranks of the lost and the damned. Their words cannot encompass the horror of the truth.

All Chaos Gods have a dual nature, but Nurgle, more so than any of the other Ruinous Powers, understands that the supposedly separate elements of his essence actually work together in a self-sustaining cycle rather than standing apart from one another as different explanations of the same thing. Khorne, for instance, is a god of bloodshed and killing—of utter carnage—and also one of martial pride and a sense of accomplishment or betterment. These two halves can be seen as two sides of the same coin, but the coin must be flipped to view and appreciate its obverse. But this coin is illusory; there is no divide between its two faces, no beginning and no end. The coin is nought but a feeble mortal metaphor for the truth of Nurgle's influence. On one "side" there is decay, death, and

disease. What would be on the other side of this coin is in fact part and parcel of the first side. Hope, rebirth, resistance, and growth all arise directly from facing death and decay. The Seers of the Eldar Craftworlds and the Inquisitors of the Imperium will never share this truth with the weak-minded fools who drink in their lies like mother's milk.

For a Lord of Chaos, Nurgle's actions seem oddly harmonious—caring even. To receive the blessings of Nurgle, all one has to do is want to live and be willing to do whatever it takes to cling to life. All else follows naturally from there. Worshipers of Khorne must push toward ever-greater levels of destruction and carnage despite the risks to themselves or even to their allies. Those who devote themselves to Tzeentch must deny their lot in life and seek to change everything, never appreciating what they have. Followers of Slaanesh seek to escape reality in a blur of sensation and self-delusion. All that is required to feel the caring touch of Nurgle is to see life for what it is and to want to make the most of it. All that is needed is faith in the future provided by Nurgle.

While an invitation to stroll down Nurgle's pox-strewn path should be welcomed as an honour, not all see it as such. Wasting away under the seemingly malign influence of a skin-eating disease is painful to the afflicted and often repulsive to those around him. When a child's flesh turns a sickly pale green and her eyes glaze over and become dull, milky, unseeing orbs, her father comes to know that he is powerless to prevent her suffering. Seeing a friend's battlefield wound blacken and ooze blood-tinged pus, the stench of its rot choking the air of a barracks, is a reminder of the frailty of all mortals.

If this decay comes at the hands of Nurgle, via the thrust of a rusted blade or the unleashing of a plague, many will curse his name. For those who are unable to see that this pain and suffering lifts the veil that hides the truth of life and death from them, such moments and visions are terrifying. Some blessed mortals, however, are able to look beyond the putrescence and see the decay for what it is—a gift from the Lord of All.

This gift, regardless of the form it takes, opens eyes even as it liquefies them. It simultaneously atrophies the leg muscles of its recipients and gives them the strength to march toward a greater purpose. It is Nurgle's great ambition to speed this universe toward its end by eroding the foundations of reality much as a disease can erode the spirits and bodies of those infected. Through his careful and ceaseless experimentations, begun within his wondrous Garden and then unleashed throughout the galaxy, the pillars that support the framework of existence are slowly but surely weakened. There will come a time when they collapse entirely and the universe will begin a massive transformation. The old ways will be swept aside like a troublesome fly. All that was will cease to be, and from the rotted ruins a new and glorious reality will emerge—one dominated by Nurgle and his beloved children. Those who walk with Nurgle and aid him in bringing about the Great Corruption, as Nurgle calls it, do so with joy in their hearts. They know that Nurgle's victory is assured and that when all things come to an end and life begins anew, they will have helped make it so. This makes theirs a life worth living, despite, and because of, the gifts of their caring master.





PUTRESCENCE PERSONIFIED

"I gazed at his magnificence, my vision completely filled with his glorious girth. All around me was flesh and smiling flies. Within his bulk I spied lesser minions, suckling on his leaking entrails. At his feet pools of pus and other bodily fluids gathered, in which his children splashed and played with glee. It was a blessing to behold such glory and joy. It was with great sadness that I awoke into a world filled with Imperial dogma and admonitions. I knew then the path I must walk."

—Taken from the *Journal of Ulbirna*

When it comes to understanding the glory that is the physical form of the Plaguefather, those who are privileged enough to be able to read about him in the pages of secret texts hidden away in the Black Library are on equal footing with the primitive warriors gathered around sooty bonfires within the wandering Kill Kroozer battleships of marauding Orks. Nurgle, like other Chaos gods, does not have one single form that can be recorded, shared, analysed, or conceived. His is majesty unfathomable by the mortal mind.

Still, if one were to delve into the comparative histories and galaxy-wide myths associated with Nurgle, certain commonalities would present themselves. Whereas

other gods within the Realm of Chaos are associated with dozens, even hundreds, of depictions, there are far fewer variations on the appearance of the Plaguefather. The legends and tales universally describe Nurgle in unflattering terms. He is said to be a vast mound of rotting flesh, with open sores and gaping wounds in which his lesser minions cavort and frolic. Weeping pustules ooze filth and his bowels constantly issue putrescent waste. Beneath his fingernails, maggots and other carrion feeders lay eggs around which develop cysts that periodically burst open and spew their rancid payloads. Perhaps the tales are correct. Perhaps they are not. It does not matter, though, because whatever it is dwells within the mansion at the centre of the Garden, there can be no denying that the creations of this being are both foul and wondrous, and the joy with which he goes about his work is infectious.

Even if none of the insanity-inspired stories of Nurgle can be counted on to be perfectly accurate, the similarities among them are too hard to dismiss, and those similarities extend beyond the gut-churning descriptions of his open sores, exposed intestines, and stupefying stench. Rot and decay are part of Nurgle's nature, but so it seems are jocularly and enthusiasm. Such is the paradox of Nurgle.

Indeed, it may be his boundless energy, the passion with which he delights in his work, and his irrepressible joviality that erodes the minds of so many who contemplate his existence. It seems impossible to believe that a rotund, foetid purveyor of plague and ruin could simultaneously positively beam with mirth and have such concern for the billions of souls upon whom he has inflicted his wracking and hideous poxes. To bend the mind toward the task of reconciling such foulness with such frivolity is to invite madness. Those who are able to do so without slipping into lunacy are fortunate. They will have taken an important step toward understanding the Great Corruption that is to come. Unlike their less "enlightened" brethren, they alone will recognise that the Plaguelord is a tireless gardener of rot, who is always trying to prepare the slowly eroding realm they call reality for its grotesque apotheosis.

TEN-THOUSAND LONG YEARS I HAVE HAD TO REFLECT ON THE TRUTHS OF THE PLAQUEFATHER, AND THESE TRUTHS THE GOD OF PESTILENCE HAS SEEN FIT TO GRANT TO ME AS GIFTS OF HIS DARK ESTEEM:

—ALL ROTS. BODIES, MINDS, SOULS, IDEALS. THESE THINGS DECAY, AND AS THEY DO, THEIR BEARERS APPROACH THE STATE OF WRACKED ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE LORD OF ALL'S EMBRACE.

—TO STRUGGLE IS TO SUCCUMB, FOR IN STRUGGLE ONE FEEDS THE PACE OF ENTROPY. THEREFORE, THOSE WHO FIGHT AGAINST THE INEVITABLE ARE ALREADY VANQUISHED.

—DEATH CANNOT BE CHEATED, DECAY CANNOT BE FORESTALLED. IN THE END, THE PLAQUE GOD WELCOMES ALL TO HIS REALM. THEREFORE, ONLY THOSE WHO WALK INTO HIS ARMS WILLINGLY, IN AWE OF HIS DECREPIT GLORY, CAN CLAIM POWER ETERNAL.

—AGORIS THE FOUL, APOSTLE OF THE RUINOUS ONES

THE GARDEN OF NURGLE

"In this universe, all rots. In this universe, one must rot to survive."

—Excerpt from *The Enlightenment of Korvede Kaltbrax, Harbinger of Carrion*

The four great Gods of Chaos can each claim dominion over many of the inhabited regions of the galaxy. These holdings can be as small as the camp of a tribal cult on a backward primitive planet or as large as entire worlds or systems. None of these domains, even if added all together, can compare to the size, scope and spectacle of the abode each of the Ruinous Powers claims for himself within the Realm of Chaos. In truth, a meaningful comparison of the sizes of the mortal realms to those in the Immaterium is impossible. Concepts such as time and space have nearly no relevance in the Warp. The Realm of Chaos is made of thoughts and dreams and reacts to the conflicts and emotions of those who pass through it. As the most powerful entities within the Warp, the Gods of Chaos exert the most control over the shape of this dark dimension. These gods have, therefore, created kingdoms that are not so much regions with borders as they are manifested states of being, and as such they are apt to expand or diminish according to the waxing and waning of the power of their lord. It is only when realms meet at what a mortal mind might loosely conceive of as their borders that any semblance of boundaries can be considered.

Khorne, Slaanesh, Tzeentch, and Nurgle each exert their particular influence over the space around them through their will, their actions, and the deeds of their minions. This results in vastly different domains for each god. The Blood God is grounded in war and conflict of all kinds, and thus his realm has many battlefields upon which his minions constantly fight. Slaanesh's personal paradise is full of seductive wonders and bewildering beauty, where wanderers face temptation around each bend in the road. Tzeentch's domain is a chaotic jumble of impossible structures, mazes, and constantly shifting landscapes. Nurgle has a garden.

It is no ordinary garden. Perhaps it is not a garden at all, but the mortal minds that contemplate the manifested will of the Lord of Decay must attempt to make some sort of sense out of what they have seen or heard about in whispered tales. They must place it in some sort of relatable context that they can consider without going insane. The same tomes and other forbidden texts that have attempted to describe the lord of the land himself have, for the most part, agreed that the idea of Nurgle's realm being a perverse, deadly, and yet strangely beautiful garden best puts Chaos into terms they can fathom.

Like a normal garden, the domain of Nurgle is home to a bewildering array of flora and fauna, all interconnected and supporting the whole. Beds of bright blue Shovelpetal plants dig themselves up and leave the dirt in which they grew so that Plaguebearers can plant new Skullseeds in the rich loam. As the Skullseeds grow and blossom, they attract bounding, stomping, over-exuberant Beasts that mistake their fruits



for the heads of new playthings. This scatters their matter violently into the air where it comes to rest on the wings of the ubiquitous flies. Slowed by the sticky pulp of the splattered plants, these insects become easy prey for other flying creatures that ingest them as they soar through the rot-choked air. Unbeknownst to the predators, bloatflies are carriers of many of Nurgle's experimental diseases and other creations. With their innards thus infected, these predators sicken, vomiting the contents of their guts all across the garden as they fly about and eventually exploding in showers of life-giving flesh and blood. This bounty of mutated and mutilated tissue falls into new areas of the Garden beneath, decaying into compost and starting the cycle of life and death anew.

Though the Garden of Nurgle does share certain commonalities with gardens and jungles on planets in realspace, it still is not a worldly garden in any sane sense. A visitor in this bizarre and perilous realm doesn't walk from this place to that. He experiences what needs to be experienced. Even the Daemons that tend the Garden are not really what might be thought of as a work force that arrives at a place, does a job, and then leaves for other regions. These Daemons are a part the experience of the garden itself. This is especially troublesome for the Plaguebearers, whose metamorphosed minds were once mortal, and still strive to impose a modicum of reality in their unreal existences. Still, even the Plaguebearers accept their place in the Garden and spend their eternity enjoying all it offers in their own way.

The Plaguefather affords all his children many ways to explore and appreciate his realm, and even to become a part of it. Though he is a god of Chaos, he also has a need to create order, to monitor his creations, and to control his experiments. A visitor to Nurgle's realm would find a dizzying amount of diversity of experiences. Here he might find trees made of nothing but the flesh of Eldar, constantly oozing the tears of a dying race. There he might find fields where tongues sprout up from the earth, each one blistered by the malign influence of a different infection. There is no telling what wonders await around each bend in the paths that stretch and wind throughout the Garden, but any who encounter them will surely have their sanity tested and questioned, should they survive to share the tale.

The Garden of Nurgle is an ever-changing realm, shifting according to the needs and whims of its master. Many areas exist only temporarily, taking shape to allow him to indulge a particular fancy or to be granted to an especially accomplished Great Unclean One as a reward. Even so, the legends hint that some aspects of this foetid domain remain relatively constant. Nurgle has need of fields in which to plant his crops of blighted herbs, pits to hold the bodies upon which he conducts his experiments, and, most important of all, a gigantic and decrepit mansion in which to store his creations, brew his legendary contagions, entertain guests, and plot the course of the Great Corruption.

THE BLIGHTED MANSION OF MISERY AND MIRTH

There is a house of decay at the centre of Nurgle's Garden. Its wracked and twisted structure creaks and groans under the influence of baleful toxic winds. Shutters cling just barely to window frames only half filled with broken panes of filth-covered glass. Sewage drains spill forth beetles, maggots, and twisted centipedes with only tongues for their bodies and human fingers for legs. Paint continually cracks and peels away from the wood beneath, yet the house never loses its grey-green hue. Along the roof, hundreds of chimneys bellow out dark clouds that, upon close inspection, are composed of millions of floating, buzzing flies.

All around this house, trees made of bone bear fruit that rots even as it swells. The leafless boughs of these ancient trees provide shelter for daemoniac birds that sing the funeral dirges of any unwelcome visitor. It is a house of pestilence, rot, and

death. This is Nurgle's Mansion, and that means that it is also a place of hope and renewal. There can be no explanation for the strength that keeps this structure from collapse save that it is the dwelling place of the Lord of All, whose boundless energy, sense of eternal purpose, and limitless joy for his work finds perfect peace with the inevitability of decay.

Nurgle himself often sits in a massive chair just to the side of the mansion's front door. From there he entreats visitors, both summoned and unexpected, to approach, share tales and questionable libations, and explore the countless rooms within.

Inside the vast structure, a guest could easily become lost. Rotten floorboards send many to a doom of slow consumption by the carrion feeders that dwell in the lower levels. Grand staircases decorated with moth-eaten rugs beckon to wandering souls, leading them to chambers where Daemons are glad to receive new, fresh flesh.

Should the guest bypass these rooms and continue upward, he might find his way to the attic, where Nurgle keeps samples of his multitudinous works of decay, catalogued and counted over and over again by attendant Plaguebearers.

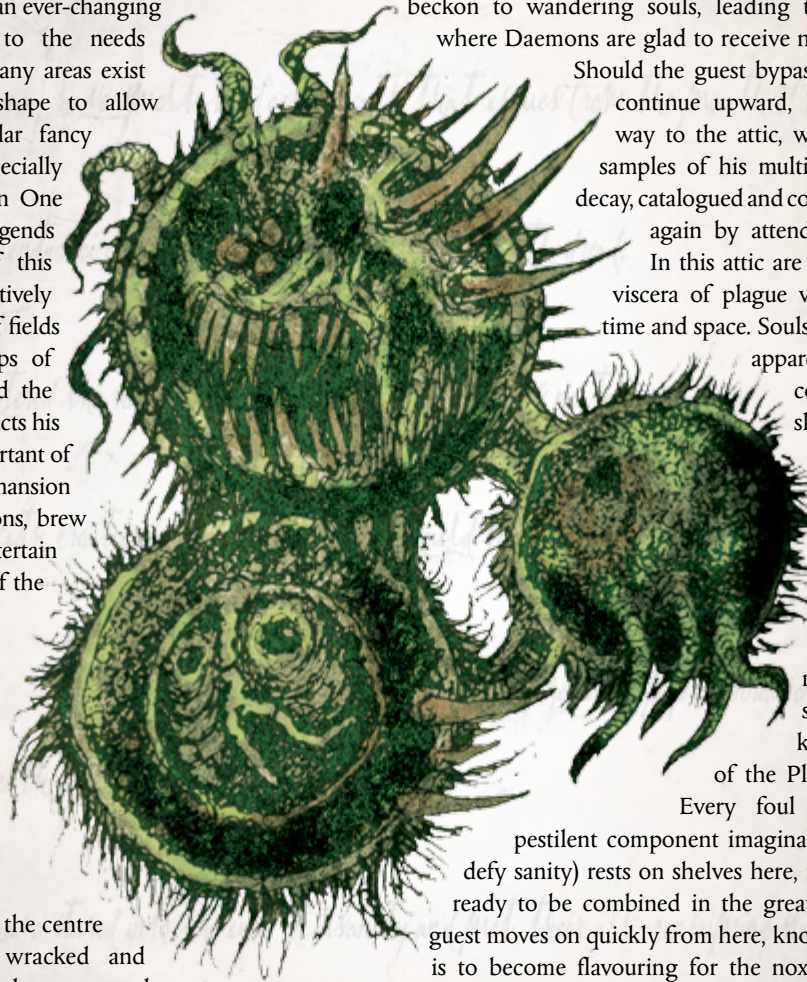
In this attic are jars containing the viscera of plague victims from across time and space. Souls are trapped within apparently simple glass containers, left to slowly dim and fade as maladies of the spirit waste them to the bone.

If the visitor walked past the stairs and pushed deeper into the mansion, he might stumble upon the kitchens and larders of the Plaguefather's home.

Every foul ingredient, every pestilent component imaginable (and some that defy sanity) rests on shelves here, neatly labelled and ready to be combined in the great cauldron. A wise guest moves on quickly from here, knowing that to linger is to become flavouring for the noxious stew, for this cauldron is among Nurgle's prized possessions and he likes to keep it full. It is in this great black crucible that the Lord of All brews the many plagues he pours into the mortal realm. Nurgle is a creative being, and he will take inspiration for experimentation where he finds it. Seldom can he resist the temptation to add nearby visitors to his virulent concoctions.

THE VIBRANT GROUNDS OF A MORBID ESTATE

Nurgle is unlike the other Ruinous Powers in many ways, including how he views his domain within the Realm of Chaos. Khorne, for instance, rarely leaves his throne, barking orders to his generals from atop a mound of skulls. Slaanesh watches the



happenings of his kingdom from within his palace or wanders the universe seeking to tempt mortals into giving up their souls to satisfy his hunger. Tzeentch seems to not care much at all for the state of his warped and fractured lands, spending his time plotting and interfering with affairs in realms beyond his own. Nurgle, on the other hand, cherishes the beauty and surprises of his Garden. He routinely takes strolls down its twisted paths, cavorting with his Daemons and stopping to observe as one of his diseases takes its toll on a wounded captive. Nurgle is in touch with his land and its many regions.

In his wanderings outside of the Mansion, he passes by some of his favourite places, many of which have existed since Nurgle first thought of them and are likely to be the models for the reborn universe that is to come. A moment's journey from the Mansion are the Death Beds, a place he visits more often than perhaps any other. It is a place that serves two purposes. Not only are wayward travellers and defeated invaders trapped here, stored in the deep pits and sucking muck of this place awaiting some future foul use, or their eventual demise, but it is here that Nurgle can indulge in one of his greatest forms of entertainment. The Plaguefather loves to hear stories of the realms beyond his own. They inspire him to create new pestilences that are well suited to other lands, and in the Death Beds he has countless potential storytellers. Sometimes he offers these unfortunates the chance to improve their position by spitting the worms from their mouths and sharing tales of their worlds with him. Those who amuse him sufficiently are plucked from the muck and removed to the Mansion. There they have the great honour of becoming vessels for Nurgle's newest plagues. Once they are properly infected, Grandfather Nurgle smiles, gives them one last tender, gut-churning embrace, and sends them back into the lands their stories described.

After visiting the Death Beds, Nurgle often makes the Poxyards the next stop on his stroll. It is here that he tests the efficacy of his contagions of the flesh and spirit. Each malady requires a different set of trials to gauge its ability to achieve the Plaguefather's desires. This means that the physical form of the Poxyards changes to suit the task. For a test of the spirit, this region of the Garden may be filled with crystal clear lakes. A dehydrated test subject may see these lakes and, believing salvation is at hand, drink deeply of the cool waters. Suddenly the water will turn to pus, tormenting the sick and weakened soul. For a test of a skin-eating disease, the Poxyards may be filled with Clawthrust Brambles. Infected captives can be sent running into the daemon-plants, chased by Beasts. If the captives scream as they pass through the razor-edged branches of the plants, then Nurgle knows that the poor wretches can still feel pain and his affliction needs refinement. No matter the incarnation of the Poxyards, this

corner of the Garden always gives Nurgle new insights, and therefore he spends a great deal of time there.

There are other places such as these—places that are always buzzing with activity and joy. The Morabusium where the most precious and toxic herbs take root, the Dungalash Arboretum where refined excrement hangs from trees like putrid, reeking vines, and many others. All of these regions provide Nurgle with the ingredients and insights he needs to further his work at the cauldron when he returns to the Mansion after one of his invigorating jaunts.

THE REALM OF A MILLION AND ONE PLAGUES

In addition to the mainstay regions of the Garden, there are many others that enjoy a less permanent existence, coming and going with the ascendancy and passing of one of Nurgle's many plagues. Some of these likely only exist in the nightmare visions and untrustworthy hallucinations of disease-ravaged minds. Still, the Garden is near infinite, and it is not so unbelievable that a recipient of one of Nurgle's great gifts might be blessed with a fleeting glimpse of the Plaguefather's realm.

With their last dying breaths, some mortals gasp and choke out words saying that they hear faint bells tolling. Perhaps they refer to the blossoms that grow in the Deathbell Lily Fields. When a mortal dies as the result of one of Nurgle's many diseases, one of these pallid flowers opens up and emits a tinny chime to mark the success of Nurgle's handiwork. The ringing is incessant.

The Hanging Gardens of Thush'Bolg are a sight to be seen. This remote slice of Nurgle's realm was given to the Great Unclean One Thush'Bolg as acknowledgement of his use of a choking plague to wipe out an Ork infestation on Hurax, a planet that Nurgle coveted. To commemorate his victory and to demonstrate constant thanks to his lord for his reward, Thush'Bolg used their own intestines to hang every single Ork from the colony in the trees of his domain. There they dangle and rot, slowly dying but never quite finding release.

Plaguebearers toss organs from the bodies of disease victims into sorting pools, making it easier for them to count the numbers that have died from each ailment. Beasts of Nurgle frolic in fields where planted spines yield crops of dementia-inducing foodstuffs. Nurglings cackle with glee as they roll down hillsides that form spontaneously when Great Unclean Ones vomit up regiments they consumed thousands of years ago. The Garden of Nurgle is a wondrous place filled with vitality, mirth, and experiences beyond mortal comprehension. It is a playground for the minions of the Lord of Decay, a laboratory for his work, and a comforting home for a god that knows his realm is the shape of things to come.



SERVANTS OF THE GREAT PARADOX

"So many wondrous joys! So many hopes and dreams! Oh, Plaguefather, your gifts are boundless! Still, I will make an accounting of them."

—Pusmaw, Plaguebearer of Nurgle

Nurgle's Daemons and mortals alike smile at the thought of serving their god. Other masters are harsh and demanding, but the Lord of Flies only asks that his servants embrace each moment. Though they are rotting, diseased, and corrupted beyond redemption, Nurgle's blessed minions are rewarded with a sense of peace and certitude about their ultimate purpose in the universe.

DAEMONS

Like all Daemons that serve at the whim of their dark deity, the minions of the Great Lord of Decay are beholden to the commands of their master. Yet unlike the ambitious Bloodletters of the Blood God or the self-centred Daemonettes of the Prince of Pleasure, those Daemons who serve Nurgle do so happily, understanding their part in the Great Corruption and counting the days until it comes to pass.

From within the Garden of Nurgle, the daemoniac minions of the Plaguefather each contribute to Nurgle's goals in their own way. Some aid their master in the creation of system-crippling diseases by bringing their lord rotted, maggot-infested flesh from fallen foes. Others sow the galactic winds with the spores of their lord's many plagues, bringing corruption and rot to distant worlds. Legions of Daemons are sent into the field of battle to bring death directly to the doorstep of the foes of Nurgle, piercing flesh and spirit alike with foul plagueswords and other wicked weapons of decay. There are even those whose only contribution is to play, reminding the others that Nurgle is a god of vitality and boundless energy, and not merely a death dealer.

Counting, harvesting, experimenting, reaping, consuming, rotting, laughing—all are important to Nurgle, and his beloved children are eager to please their Plaguefather.

GREAT UNCLEAN ONES

Plague Lords, Fly Masters, Stench Lords of Nurgle

Greater Daemons of all Chaos Gods go by many names, each tending to emphasise a particular aspect of these terrible beings, but only Great Unclean Ones have the distinction of being allowed to use the name of their master as an appellation of their own. This may lend some credence to the ravings of those who claim to have beheld Nurgle's grand form. If the hysterical outbursts of these broken souls are to be believed, their accountings of the appearance of the Plaguefather are remarkably similar to those given by mortals who have beheld an actual Great Unclean One and lived to recount the horror to others. Vast and rotund, oozing filth and corruption, leaving decay and foulness in their wake, the physical form of the Great Unclean Ones serves to terrify the



foes of Nurgle and to remind his followers of the magnificent god that has blessed them with the strength to persevere in the face of such overwhelming bodily corruption.

These Stench Lords are Nurgle's favoured children; his blessed emissaries and trusted lieutenants. In battle, they lead his armies as generals and devastatingly powerful warriors. They gestate the countless Nurglings that continually crawl out from within their corpulent forms. They travel the galaxy, housing their master's many plagues deep inside their cauldron-like guts, brewing the foul concoctions to perfect potency before finally ripping open their own bellies and disgorging the virulent contents upon Nurgle's chosen recipients. As macabre master gardeners and wardens of woe, they tend to the decaying plant life and diseased animals of the Garden of Nurgle, while also ensuring that the Plaguebearers and other denizens of the Garden do their part in bestowing Grandfather Nurgle's gifts on the galaxy.

DAEMON PRINCES

Purveyors of Poxes, Filthlords, Harbingers of Rebirth

Many mortal followers of the Chaos Gods have wrought terrible deeds in the name of their masters. Leaders of cults recruit new worshipers routinely. Billions of adherents commit foul acts of devotion to their dark lords every day. These actions are common, and go largely unnoticed by the likes of Nurgle. To gain the attention of the Lord of All, a follower must be willing to spread disease on a grand scale, infecting entire planets with a deadly pox. He must erode the foundations of entire cities and send their millions of inhabitants into a state of starvation, rot, and decay. A candidate for Daemonhood must prove his worth on a level that most mortal minds cannot even begin to contemplate. Once he has committed an act that brings a smile to Nurgle's blistered and seeping face, he can pledge himself to unwavering service and dedication to bringing about the Great Corruption.

Few who strive for this prize actually claim it. Failure ends in a wretched death, or worse, the curse of Spawndom, eternal life as a mindless, writhing monstrosity. Still, those who worm their way into Nurgle's foul heart receive his darkest blessing: Apotheosis.

PLAGUEBEARERS

Rotbearers, Maggotkin, Tainted Ones, Nurgle's Tallymen

Nurgle is proud of all of the plagues and poxes he has created as gifts for the mortal realm, but one disease stands out above all the rest as perhaps the favourite of the Plaguelord—Nurgle's Rot. Most of the afflictions ravage the bodies of those who become infected by them, and many even eat away at the soul of their victims, but Nurgle's Rot utterly consumes those who contract it—mind, body, and soul. It transforms them from beings of weak mortal flesh, and sees them reborn in the Garden of Nurgle as a Plaguebearer.

Once they emerge from the muck and filth of the Garden, their mortal suffering is gone, a reward for their faith in Nurgle and their acceptance of his gifts. Whatever their old body may have been, be it Imperial Guardsman, spacefaring merchant, impoverished mother of ten malnourished whelps, or leader of a Plague Cult in some rusted out underhive, their new forms are all very similar to those of the other newly-reincarnated. Their flesh is dull and covered in sores and open wounds. Pustules form and burst, their contents pouring out and collecting in the folds of the daemon's flesh. Their faces all bear a single central eye and a horn sprouts from their head. Their limbs are unnaturally gangly and yet filled with a strength the mortal likely had not felt in many years. A plaguesword, the weapon by which it will infect the enemies, and friends, of Nurgle, is given to each new Plaguebearer as a symbol of allegiance. The person they once were is no more, evolved into the physical embodiment of Nurgle's affection for his children.

Though they have left their mortal selves behind, perhaps a piece of their former existence lingers within them, for these Tallymen invariably seek to fill their days with seemingly mundane tasks, most of which involve seeking to impose some kind of order in the chaos of their new home. Many tend to his Garden, help usher other Plaguebearers into existence like midwives, or keep catalogues of the diseases Nurgle has created. Some even attempt the impossible task of keeping a tally of the ever-changing number of Nurglings that populate the Garden of Nurgle. It's all rather odd behaviour for a Daemon, when compared to the savage acts of Bloodletters or the predations of Daemonettes, but it pleases Nurgle to see his children doing as they wish, and a father's love for his children is best left simply admired, if not understood.

HERALDS

Prime Corruptors, The Plagueridden, The Resolute

Those who receive the blessing of Nurgle's Rot endure some of the most twisted and foul bodily depredation imaginable. Sores swell, pulse, and split open, spraying pus and maggots. Bruises appear in an instant from even the slightest contact, often times with no contact at all, turning the flesh purple, yellow, and black. Fingers, toes, ears, and lips rot away and fall off. Hip bones soften and break, forcing leg bones through rancid flesh. In particularly vicious cases, the eyes and tongue become fertile breeding grounds of flies or even an especially mischievous Nurgling or two. It is a misery to which no amount of description can ever possibly do justice.



The toll it takes reaches beyond the physical form and into the minds and souls of the mortals who contract it. Still, dedicated followers of Nurgle understand that even this suffering is a gift from their master. Most bear the decay for as long as they can, cherishing each day of life and appreciating their place in the great cycle. There are those, however, who abandon all that Grandfather Nurgle has given them. They opt for a self-inflicted and untimely death rather than suffer with their malady as they promised they would. These wretches are forgotten. Cast aside by a disappointed lord, they dissolve into nothing, their flesh and souls utterly consumed.

There is a third path open to the strong and resolute believers. Resistance to Nurgle's Rot is always impossible in the end, but for these devoted mortals, the end can be forestalled. As their bodies collapse further and further into ruin, a peaceful calm comes over their minds and settles into their souls. At last, immobile heaps of little more than quivering flesh and rotted entrails, even these mortals succumb. When they are reborn in the Garden, their Plaguebearer form is more massive, stronger, and more powerful than those who could not resist the Rot as they did. These Plaguebearers reap one of Nurgle's greatest rewards, leading and inspiring their lesser brethren as Heralds of Nurgle.

BEASTS

Nurgle's Lapdogs, Slime Hounds, Bombastic Contagions

Each of Nurgle's daemonic minions takes delight in doing its part to bring to fruition the Plaguefather's grand vision for the collapse and rebirth of the universe. There is much to do, from counting the death toll of each newly unleashed plague, to filling the pus pits with fresh rot. The effort is ceaseless, but not without joy. As the Daemons go about their work, they will sometimes be interrupted by an unexpected, but always appreciated, visit from one of the Lord of Decay's most wonderful creations—a Beast of Nurgle. Propelled by stocky legs and a bile-coated, slithering tail, these enthusiastic Slime Hounds bound about the Garden, constantly seeking playmates. Their putrescent tongues wrap around Plaguebearers, drawing them toward the Beast's noxious maw. They crash headlong into meticulously organized piles of limbs, heads, and other rotted body parts, causing the Tallymen to have to begin their counts anew. Nothing embodies the joyful nature of Chaos in quite the same way as a Beast of Nurgle. Though they undo some work that has been done, not one Plaguebearer, Great Unclean One, or Nurgling ever complains, for these Beasts are the physical realisation of their God's will to bring energy, vitality, and joviality to the universe. They remind the other minions why it is they serve their master.

This boundless enthusiasm for play and unquenchable thirst for attention also serves the Lord of Decay when his forces march to conflict. A Beast of Nurgle could go thousands of years never knowing the greater world outside of the Garden. When taken to the mortal realm and sent toward Nurgle's enemies, the excitement a Beast of Nurgle feels is impossible to restrain. They lunge into the ranks of the enemy, trying to find new friends and different playmates. Armour rots instantly upon contact with the caustic goo that coats the Beasts. Bones and weapons shatter under their bulk as they roll around on top of their newfound companions. When the unfortunate victims cease moving, the Beast of Nurgle pauses briefly, feeling a touch of sadness that his friend will not play anymore, before setting off to find someone new.

PLAGUE DRONES

The Rotting Riders, Harvesters of Sorrows, Pus Crows

When a Beast of Nurgle suffers the ultimate frustration of being killed by the very playthings with which it had hoped to frolic, its essence retreats back into the Warp and comes to rest in the slime pits of the Garden. There it spends centuries forming a new body, shielded from interference by a mass of bloated flies. Over the course of time, depression and resentment take hold within the Beast. This makes it a very rare creature in the domain of the Pus God—a being without joy, mirthless and bitter. When the Beast emerges from its long dormancy, its new form is much different from that of the creature that it once was. Its skin develops a chitinous layer on its back. Spindly, bladed limbs replace its short, stocky legs. Most dramatically, the Beast's tentacles give way to enormous wings similar to those of the flies that protected the Beast while it regenerated.

Thus transformed, the new Rot Fly attempts to return to the mortal realm, malice in its heart driving it to seek out and destroy those who refused to play with it centuries before. Left to its own devices, the Rot Fly's anger would drive it mad, but Nurgle is a loving and merciful god and cannot bear to see one of his children suffer so. To ease the Rot Fly's pain, The Plaguefather pairs it with a Plaguebearer who has earned a place of pride in the daemonic legions of the God of Filth. The relationship between a Rot Fly and its rider benefits both the former Beast and the favoured Plaguebearer. The rider gains the ability to cover ground more quickly, allowing it to count Nurgle's many putrid blessings more thoroughly than ever before. The mount gains an eternal companion, allowing the pain of its previous rejection to fester a little less, and its victim's wounds to fester a little more.

NURGLINGS

Gleeful Castoffs, Pus Spores, Mites of Nurgle, Tiny Plagues

Though they are some of the least of Nurgle's minions, Nurglings are surely some of the most numerous, and among the most favoured. Even their appearance is pleasing to the Lord of All, for each Nurgling is like a minute copy of the dread master himself. This is perhaps not surprising, given that Nurglings are formed within the innards of Great Unclean Ones, who themselves physically reflect Nurgle's repulsive magnificence. Nurglings serve the Filth-father in which they were formed, often pretending that their progenitor is Nurgle himself. They play within the folds of his flesh, fetch morsels for him to consume, pick at his sores or give him new ones, and otherwise seek his approval, giggling all the while. Sometimes they are gifted to Heralds or other powerful champions to act as a living litter for him, or to hold him aloft atop a palanquin. In these cases, the Nurglings will treat their new master much as they had treated the Great Unclean One from which they came—whether the new lord would prefer it or not.

Daemons of Nurgle emulate the Lord of Decay and follow his path in many different ways. When they are not vying for the attention of their parent-Daemon, Nurglings most often try to do things that reflect the mirthful nature of Nurgle himself. This frequently leads to them interfering with the work of the Plaguebearers, who find Nurglings to be something of a nuisance—though they don't normally give voice to their irritation, at least not when a Great Unclean One is within earshot. Just when a Plaguebearer is nearly finished counting the number of drips of pus required to fill a particular pool, for example, a swarm of Nurglings may come running through it, playfully splashing in the rancid goo and scattering it all around. It is their nature to cause mischief, just as it is the Plaguebearer's nature to keep tallies. In the Realm of Chaos, even in the relatively ordered domain of Nurgle, it is no surprise that harmony eludes the grasp of most Daemons.

MORTAL FOLLOWERS OF NURGLE

The universe is vast, and yet no part of it remains untouched by conflict, change, and greed. Service to Nurgle secures a safe harbour in a swirling sea of doubt. Fear of infirmity is set aside and replaced by the knowledge that a greater destiny lays ahead, free from the nightmares that plague those who do not understand the great cycle of death and rebirth.

Not all mortal followers of Nurgle are quick to accept his blessings. Many need to suffer before they can accept the truth. For a path full of paradoxes, one of the greatest is that the longer a blighted mortal struggles against accepting Nurgle, the more powerful his form will be when he finally yields. Through immeasurable suffering and loss, the mortal will gain resiliency and strength.

CHAOS SPACE MARINES

Corruption. It is a word that lies at the heart of the most divisive, destructive, and long-lasting conflict the galaxy has ever known. It was corruption of the spirit that caused Horus and half of all Space Marine Legions to turn on the Emperor of Mankind. Corruption of will broke the resolve of thousands of warriors who found the unrelenting hardships of serving a weak cause in support of a cruel master too much to endure. Corruption of faith cast thousands more down a fresh path of glory and freedom, embracing new, darker masters that blessed them with tangible gifts and rewards rather than fleeting promises and thankless suffering. Corruption of the body—the infirmities of aging forms, infected wounds sustained in battle, and the ravages of illness were sufficient for countless others to turn to the only being capable of saving them from the misery of their decline—Nurgle.

Among the first to abandon the Emperor and embrace the Lord of Decay were Mortarion and his Death Guard. Abandoned by the Corpse God of Man and left to a fate of starvation and disease, they struck a bargain with their new corpulent master, Nurgle, and were saved. The pain of their affliction was numbed. Their bodies became hosts to maggots, flies, and a host of contagions. They were given renewed strength and a purpose they had never considered before. As Plague Marines, they embraced corruption in all its forms as a natural and inescapable part of life. Thus empowered and enlightened, they set about the task of taking the blessings and revelations of Nurgle to the masses. They became Nurgle's rotted fist, spreading his infectious message of hope and perseverance to the battlefields of the galaxy. But they would not be his only power armoured servants.

War zones are breeding grounds for all manner of corruption. They present ample opportunity for Nurgle's truths to manifest and present themselves to those who have open eyes with which to see them and the cunning to make use of them. Plague Marines such as the Death Guard and others spread disease with each toss of a blight grenade or thrust of a plague knife, but other forms of decay shape events as well. Fragmentary warbands from many of the Traitor Legions and renegade Space Marine Chapters, though not particularly given to devout worship of Nurgle, know



in their twisted hearts that the Pox Lord is correct in that collapse is inevitable. The Lord of Decay teaches that nothing is permanent, and it is a lesson these Chaos Space Marines have learned well.

Even after a battle has been won by the Legions of Nurgle, his presence continues to have an effect. Broken bodies lay rotting, their organs and flesh turning to mush and renewing the soil into which they seep. Though their approach is less subtle than that of a lovingly crafted plague, Chaos Space Marines are remarkably efficient at converting massive armies of enemy flesh into the raw materials of rebirth, and therefore he embraces their service to him with glee.

MUTANTS

Some who have been touched by the unchecked warping influence of gods like Slaanesh or Tzeentch might be able pass themselves off as normal, at least for a time. An extra limb or third eye can be covered up or masked, but the unmistakable stench of corruption that hangs in the air around a mutant afflicted with one of the Pox Lord's many diseases is impossible to miss. Even the smallest pustule is filled with a fluid so noxious, that when it bursts, those unfortunate enough to be nearby wretch and heave uncontrollably, struggling to avoid vomiting the contents of their stomach where they stand.

Because they find it so difficult to remain hidden, mutants who manifest the corrupting influence of Nurgle's ministrations often face very short lives. For most, this is a mercy. Their chances of becoming a great champion of Chaos

or being reborn in the Garden are slim at best, so for these putrid wretches, there truly is little hope. Still, survival instincts push them to live as long as they can, perhaps taking refuge in the dank sewers of cities or in the charnel pits of primitive cultures, where the stench of the decay and filth around them provides a slight chance of masking their own repulsive odour. Tactics such as these usually only succeed for a short time. Unless they are found and sheltered by sympathetic plague cultists, these mutants are almost invariably betrayed by their own nauseating deformities. Zealous priests, watchful wardens, or even simple frightened former family members have but to follow their noses to uncover the hiding place of a noxious mutant. Cornered, alone, and often so warped in form that they cannot flee from their persecutors, these pathetic souls find peace in flame.

PLAGUE CULTS

Not all who seek to serve Nurgle have the means to attract his attention through grand individual acts of devotion. Most mortals do not have the might of a Chaos Space Marine or the influence of a corrupt political leader. For these common worshipers, notice is often best gained when they band together as a plague cult. The power of such a group is far greater than that of any one of its members. So much that is out of reach can be seized though concerted effort. The food stores of an Imperial barracks, for example, are secured against interference and spoilage. There is a guard at the door who ensures that nothing enters or leaves without his knowledge, a supply master who inspects and maintains the food, and a cook who requisitions ingredients and uses them to prepare the meals. Alone, these individuals can do very little, but if all are members of the same plague cult, it can be another matter entirely. The guard can look the other way when suspicious materials are smuggled in and stored safely away from prying eyes. The supply master can keep the contraband out of official records and mask its presence in the larder. The cook can access the ingredients and use them to taint the meals of the entire garrison, bringing illness to all of the soldiers at once and allowing the barracks to fall to invaders. Actions such as these just might be enough to gain some small favour in the eyes of their true lord. Perhaps not, but the chances of each member of the cult are much better together than they would be alone.

Disease and despair are common throughout the galaxy. Death is ever-present as well, especially when plague grips a region. Some who would worship Nurgle see the death that follows disease, misinterpret the Plaguelord's will, and form death cults instead of plague cults. To these woeful souls, death is all. They believe that Nurgle's ultimate goal is final death. They are wrong. One common task that plague cults often take upon themselves is the eradication of these rival death cults who have so egregiously wronged Nurgle. The struggles between the two types of cults are usually limited to small skirmishes or individual assassinations. Only when it is too late, when the plague cult has vanquished the heretics, and an unstoppable contagion spreads through their streets, do the authorities realise their error.

WARBANDS

Plague cults are groups of relatively powerless individuals banding together in order to venerate Nurgle in any small way they can. Warbands have no such insignificant mortals diluting their memberships. They are comprised of some of the greatest warriors, the keenest tacticians, and the most creatively gifted mortal minions of Nurgle. Unlike plague cults, warbands of Nurgle likely already have his attention. Many members are Chaos Space Marines who will have received blessings from their master long ago. Common purpose and the power to act motivate warbands to achieve greatness in the name of the Plaguefather. Much distinguishes a warband from a plague cult, but one of the greatest distinctions they have is that they do not hide. With power, strength, will, and the many gifts of Nurgle they possess, there simply is no need.

It is not hard to imagine why a Chaos Space Marine might leave his brothers behind. Loyalty and self-sacrifice are not hallmarks of the lost and the damned. Service to Nurgle can take its toll on even the most dedicated of followers. Advanced mutation, loss of mobility, or even fanatical devotion beyond those of his fellows can leave a Plague Marine unable to function as an effective member of his squad. Sometimes his only option is to break from his squad-mates and continue to befoul the galaxy on his own. Isolation, however, is at odds with the communal nature of Nurgle. Loneliness festers in the heart of a Plague Marine or other Chaos Space Marine that has left his Legion, and Grandfather Nurgle is often moved to reach out to a wayward follower in such a position. The warrior hears the kindly laughter of his master on the cosmic winds and pursues the joyful noise. Once the mirthful trail is followed to its end, the blighted soul gives thanks to his caring God, for more often than not he arrives to find a fellowship of others whose faith and dedication to Nurgle left them in similar straits. Together, the warband forms something of a travelling cavalcade of mirth and rot, freed from the structures imposed by the organisation of their Legion and accepted by one another as exemplars of all that Nurgle teaches.

These warbands can accomplish much that a plague cult or Legion of Chaos Space Marines cannot. Examples of the fruits of such ambitions abound. The great rivers of pus that flowed from the volcano on Grenetus Major were the doing of Yorgol's Vomitmaws when the small warband passed the planet's defences undetected and delivered a pox-blessing from Nurgle's own cauldrons into the erupting mountain. Because they were free to act according to their own plans, the members of the Brotherhood of Unclean Mercy were able to seize upon an opportunity of random chance and infect the entire store of supplies in a passing merchant fleet. Thus enhanced, the cargo spread the Stenchgut Plague to an entire continent on Xurunt. These are but a few of the many deeds warbands of Nurgle have carried out in his name. Positioned perfectly between the nuisance activities of localized plague cults and the massive galaxy-spanning campaigns of corruption of the Death Guard, the actions of a warband of Nurgle serve the ends of the Lord of Decay perfectly—a fact in which their members take great solace and joy.

THE COUNTLESS ILLS

"His enemies shall wither and die. His allies shall wither and die. The universe and all within it shall wither and die. And when the Great Corruption has settled over the land, and permeated the very foundations of reality itself, then shall the Lord of All rise from the rot and ruin, spread his arms wide to reclaim all his dutiful children..."

—"The Victory of Rebirth," from *Litanies of Inevitability*

Though they strive to embrace each day of life left to them, to forestall the inevitable, those who serve Nurgle must accept their eventual death. They must also believe in the equal certainty of rebirth. This hope for something new and glorious is the great comfort that the Plaguefather has shared with them. It is a hope born from Nurgle's own understanding of the workings of the universe. Just as his followers have accepted the teachings of their lord, Nurgle himself long ago accepted that decay brings an end to all things, but that through such decay life begins anew. Decay is the victor in all battles, the opposition to which there is no resistance. This is why Nurgle embraces decay as a weapon, as a tool, and as a means of instructing and guiding his followers. Decay is at the core of Nurgle's philosophy and methods. Blessed with reshaped forms and renewed purpose, the minions of Nurgle become his instruments in the Great Corruption. As vessels and embodiments of decay, mortals and Daemons alike are effectively living fuel, powering the great cycle through their actions and, indeed, their simple rotting, infectious presence in the Realm of Chaos and the mortal plane.

ROT, GLORIOUS ROT

Few who pledge themselves to Nurgle do so in the belief that he offers an easy path to power and glory. He does not promise increased influence, brutal strength, or hedonistic excess. Those who turn to him for aid are not seeking to make their dreams become reality, to strike down those who stand in opposition, or to be adored by all who know them. No, most mortals who find their way into Nurgle's foetid embrace wish only for an end to some sort of suffering. They call to him to protect them from the ravages of disease, to save them from the slow, painful death of unchecked infection, or to otherwise spare them from whatever may ail them. There are even some who do not seek him out but are instead visited by one of his messengers and offered a bargain.

No matter if they sought his gifts or if they themselves were found, the exchange is never quite what was expected. These mortals have their doubts and fears cast aside. They find that they are no longer caught in the paralysing grip of despair and misery. Their afflictions, however, linger, and are usually joined by other blights. New sores and pustules appear, the foul liquids they contain becoming home to small worms and maggots. Bellies swell and distend, the flesh straining to contain bleeding entrails that push the abdomen outward. Old wounds rip open again spontaneously and invite

fresh infections. Whatever diseases or weakness these mortals once sought to leave behind take up permanent residence within their bodies and minds. All this must be accepted as the first lesson Nurgle teaches—decay is inescapable, but also glorious. This knowledge is illuminating for those who follow Nurgle. If all things decay, each moment is a gift. Why not use these moments to shape what is to come and secure a place in it? Why sit idly by wallowing in pain and sorrow when there is so much to do and so little time in which to do it? As these thoughts race through the minds of the newly converted, it dawns on them—their pain is deadened. Even with so many new afflictions, so much rancid corruption of the flesh, the suffering has abated. Hope arrives.

For these newest of Nurgle's adopted children, it is as if the morning fog has lifted and they see the world clearly with fresh eyes. Why had they complained about their poxes and failing bodies? What selfish desires to change their fates had prevented them from realizing their true purpose? Rot, glorious rot, becomes the constant companion for a servant of the Lord of All, instructing them, guiding their path, and reminding them that they are fortunate beyond measure to have been chosen by Nurgle to receive his gifts. Indeed, many discover that the initial malady from which they suffered, the one that drove them to seek salvation in the first place, was actually bestowed upon them by Nurgle. Rather than anger, it is joy that springs from this knowledge. These mortals believe themselves to have been chosen, destined for greatness as a true champion of Nurgle.



CHAMPIONS OF DECAY

Relatively few of those who receive Nurgle's glorious blessings distinguish themselves as much more than a tiny but welcome maggot, doing their part to eat away at the rotting corpse that is the decaying universe. Those who do differentiate themselves invariably exemplify the precepts of Nurgle's philosophy and emulate his grand and corrupted form at a level that leaves no doubt as to which of the Ruinous Powers has claimed their souls. These are the Plaguefather's mortal champions, and it is through their foul deeds that many of the greatest accomplishments of Nurgle's plan are achieved.

So often these champions take on an appearance not unlike that their dark patron. This is not unusual for minions of the Plaguefather. Great Unclean Ones are said to be small (though still massive in their own right) versions of Nurgle himself, and in turn their excreted offspring, the Nurglings, look like miniature replicas of the Great Unclean Ones that gave them life. Likewise, mortal champions become bloated, stinking, leaking, collections of rotted flesh, exposed entrails, necrotic sores, and all manner of foulness. They are surrounded by clouds of flies and followed by Nurglings that splash about in the slime trails that spread out behind them to mark their passing. Unlike the minions of the other Gods of Chaos, champions of Nurgle do not hesitate to pursue enemies into the most dank, disgusting, and polluted places. There is no cesspool or sewer noxious enough to deter Nurgle's followers. No quarantined plague zone is off limits. Once a champion of Nurgle has the scent of his foe, no amount of stink can throw him off. The determination that is such part and parcel of all that Nurgle's lessons impart serves his champions well as they do whatever must be done to serve their lord.

Lesser worshipers of Nurgle who follow them are unperturbed by the grotesque condition of champions and draw inspiration from the macabre beauty of their rotting forms, the sickly sweet odour of their rancid flesh, and the corruptive acts they commit in the name of Grandfather Nurgle.

The Plaguelord's followers all end up mimicking his appearance in one way or another. Some even became his children because they started out life bearing some passing resemblance to him. Nurgle is more than form, though. He is also philosophy. Most mortal champions, and many lesser followers, end up thinking like he does, though in a limited fashion due to the constraints of mortal minds, but it is the daemonic champions that know their father's thoughts the best.

Great Unclean Ones understand Nurgle in a way that no mortal—not even one elevated to the rank of Daemon Prince—ever could. They are nearer to their god than any mortal, and more closely involved in his plans than any Plaguebearer or other daemonic servant. There is little place for jealousy or scheming in the Garden of Nurgle or any of his domains beyond, and his Daemon Princes know this. Though they wish for nothing more than to be one with the Plaguefather, they also know they will never be as close to him as the Great Unclean Ones are. As they do with so much else as a result of Nurgle's teachings, they accept their lot. This relationship to their god differs from that of other Daemon Princes. The other Ruinous Powers take particular pleasure in deceiving mortals, damning them by tricking them with



lies and promises they know they will almost certainly never need to keep. They see their daemonic followers, even their champions, as never having had a choice but to do as they are commanded. They view these Daemons more as slaves to darkness than co-conspirators with it. In their eyes, this makes mortal servants somehow more interesting. Nurgle, on the other hand, knows most of his mortal followers turned to him as a last act of desperation, but his daemonic minions, most especially the Great Unclean Ones, have genuine affection for Grandfather Nurgle and serve him out of love. Nurgle delights in reciprocating, reminding him as it does of a kind of a cycle, and therefore takes great interest and pride in the efforts of his daemonic champions. The desires of Nurgle and his champions are one. Each knows that the Great Corruption is a higher purpose that must be served, and they do so with great resolve and satisfaction.

A PURPOSE SHARED, A PLAN DIVIDED

The Gods of Chaos are all ultimately after the same thing. Each wishes to overthrow the existing order and claim dominion over both the Realm of Chaos and the mortal world. The questions of how this is to be achieved and which lord the universe will call master are answered very differently by each of the Dark Gods. Slaanesh would see all of existence turned into a playground in which he and his minions could eternally explore new delights. Khorne desires



nothing more than to claim every skull and drop of blood to use as the mortar with which to build the foundations of his new kingdom. Tzeentch surely has his own plans for what a twisted reality reshaped in his image would look like, but he has not shared what that might be. Perhaps he does not even know himself. To Nurgle, these alternatives are indistinguishable—self-indulgent fantasies with no sense of greater purpose or understanding of the nature of things. To him, the ambitions of the others seem small.

Reality will be remade. Both the mortal plane and the Realm of Chaos have ever been on a path of decay, and from decay come death and endings. Endings, but not finality. It seems that Nurgle alone comprehends the meaning of this, the distinction. Where his brother gods each envision a destination at the end of the path, Nurgle knows that the journey turns ever back upon itself in a loop, leading to rebirth, revitalisation, and new beginnings. It is this fundamental divergence of views that sets Nurgle at odds with the other Powers, for it means that they are not actually working toward the same thing that he is. On the surface, it appears to the others that while the methods each employs may be different, the end result is much the same—the destruction of the Imperium, the enslavement or destruction of all mortals, and final dominion over all. This is, though, a superficial understanding. Differences come to light in many ways. Slaanesh is content to allow Plague Marines to inflict grievous damage on an army through blight and disease, but is then perplexed when Nurgle's servants do not allow the

minions of the Prince of Pleasure to play with the wounded, absconding with their shattered forms before delights can be explored. To Khorne it is all well and good to work with his brother Nurgle in an effort to blast a Kroot colony into oblivion, but he cannot fathom why the Plaguelord insists on leaving their former homeland untouched rather than raze it to a charred, lifeless stone. Still, these incidents pass, written off as the eccentricities of their jolly brother.

Tzeentch, however, is another matter entirely. He refuses to give Nurgle his due or to allow him to pursue his own path. He tweaks, twists, and diverts. He warps, redirects, and alters. The Master of Change is unable to accept that which will surely come to pass. He is constantly looking to modify the rules to his advantage so that his desired ending is the one that will come to pass, even if it means interfering with Nurgle's desires, no matter how small the consequences of those desires may appear to be. Nurgle knows that such meddling is pointless. He knows that the journey down the path does not stop, but the machinations of his brother are vexing and irritating just the same. The actions of Khorne and Slaanesh are a small inconvenience, but Tzeentch's games play havoc with Nurgle's plans, creating setbacks that are needless and counterproductive to not only Nurgle's own goals, but also those of the other Dark Gods. Very little causes Nurgle's smile to dip, but Tzeentch seems to be able to provoke that reaction at will. When the universe dies and then rises again, it is one of the greatest hopes of the Lord of All that like the Corpse God of Man, Tzeentch will not be reborn with it.

NURGLE AND THE LONG WAR

"The Imperium drew its last breath long ago. We are merely awaiting its death rattle, and then entropy shall claim its long-awaited victory. We are patient. We have waited ten thousand years. We will wait ten thousand more, if necessary. But I do not think it will be."

—Lethrax the Blighted Hand

For a Plague Marine or other Chaos Space Marine in the service of Nurgle, the timeless nature of existence within the Warp is a gift beyond measure. Many of the lessons and experiences that lesser mortals are unable to fully appreciate, let alone comprehend in any significant way, are theirs to explore. It gives these warriors an eternity to ponder the grandeur of their master's plan for ultimate corruption. The many diseases they have within them are given time to percolate and properly evolve into ever more deadly forms. Perhaps best of all, it may allow them to live long enough to see rot claim the body and soul of the False Emperor as he withers away to nothing on his Golden Throne. While the unfocused followers of Tzeentch waste time in futile attempts to find new ways to breach the Imperial Palace, the patient Chaos Space Marines of Nurgle know that inevitability is their ally. They have but to wait for the great victory, for nothing is eternal—not even the Emperor and his domain. For these enlightened and blighted warriors, the Long War does not seem as long as it does to others.

This is not to say they do not harbour the same righteous hatred for their former brothers that all Legions share. While they know they could simply wait for victory to come to them, they choose to follow the example of Nurgle himself and take a more active role in the downfall and renewal of the galaxy. Eternity offers them many ways to revel in the joy of living and to gain satisfaction from the death they can bring to their enemies. There are a thousand worlds ripe for virus bombing. Billions of souls wait to be tormented by plagues of the spirit. The flesh and bones of entire Space Marine chapters are there to be harvested and used as experimental subjects for Nurgle's constantly mutating catalogue of diseases. It is the duty and privilege of the veterans of the Long War to see to it that no opportunity to further the great cycle through acts of vengeance upon the Emperor's lapdogs passes by.

The betrayals committed against the Legions in the days of Horus' war against the bonds of undeserved servitude are fresh in the minds of all who fought in those days. Let Khorne's brainless savages mutilate the warriors of the Adeptus Astartes. Such violence has a

place. If the appetites of Slaanesh's brain-addled devotees get lost in the pleasures of the kill, so be it. Even the erratic, misguided actions of Tzeentch's minions can, at times, create diversions that force the enemies of the Ruinous Powers to weaken. None of this can compare to the all-encompassing totality of the Plaguelord's grand design. As empires crumble, stars collapse upon themselves and each and every pathetic Space Marine chapter fades from memory, Grandfather Nurgle and his chosen servants will have the last laugh. The galaxy will die, and from its death throes a new existence shall come into being, with Nurgle ruling as lord over it all. Not a single one of the Emperor's loyal, wretched offspring shall persist to sully it.



THE ENDLESS TALLY OF THE PLAGUEFATHER

"HOW MANY ARE THERE, VOMMIKRUX?" ASKED THE YOUNG PLAGUEBEARER.

"SILENCE, YUSTULE. I'M COUNTING," REPLIED THE ELDER DAEMON AS HE SET A ROTTING HEAD IN THE PILE TO HIS LEFT.

"IT'S BLACKROT, OLD STINKY, AND I KNOW. THAT'S WHAT I ASKED. WHAT'S OUR COUNT SO FAR?"

BLACKROT'S ENTHUSIASM WAS WELCOME MOST OF THE TIME, BUT AT PRESENT IT WAS DISTRACTING TO THE OLD PLAGUEBEARER. VOMMIKRUX HAD BEEN SORTING THE HEAD PILES FOR LONGER THAN HE COULD REMEMBER. IT WAS THE FIRST TASK HE'D BEEN GIVEN WHEN HE TOOK FORM AS A PLAGUEBEARER, AND HE WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO MOVE ON TO ANOTHER UNTIL HE FINISHED IT. HE HAD COUNTED THE HEADS MORE THAN A THOUSAND TIMES SINCE THE FIRST, NEVER COMING UP WITH THE SAME NUMBER AND THEREFORE NEVER KNOWING IF HE WAS ACCURATE. NOW HE HAD THE END IN SIGHT. NO TROUBLESOME NURGLINGS HAD STOLEN ANY HEADS FROM THE PILE, NOR HAD A FRESH CROP SPRUNG UP IN THE GARDEN. JUST A FEW MORE AND HE COULD COMPLETE HIS TASK. HE JUST NEEDED BLACKROT TO CALM DOWN AND LET HIM FINISH. TWELVE THOUSAND AND SIXTEEN, TWELVE THOUSAND AND SEVENTEEN...

BLACKROT GRABBED VOMMIKRUX'S ELBOW, TUGGED IT SLIGHTLY AND PEERED OVER HIS ELDER'S SHOULDER AT THE HEAD IN HIS HAND. "IS THAT TWELVE THOUSAND AND FIFTEEN, OR TWELVE THOUSAND AND SIXTEEN?"

"IT'S TWELVE THOUSAND AND SIXTEEN, OR WAIT, MAYBE IT'S NINETEEN. I... I DON'T KNOW! TZEENTH TAKE YOU, BLACKROT, I DON'T KNOW! YOU'VE MADE ME LOSE COUNT. NOW I HAVE TO START OVER. NOT AGAIN..."

BLACKROT JUMPED UP AND GRABBED A HEAD FROM THE PILE. "IT'S ALRIGHT, STINKY," HE SAID WITH A ROTTING SMILE, "I'LL HELP!"



DEATH BRINGERS

AT THE EDGE
OF DESPAIR

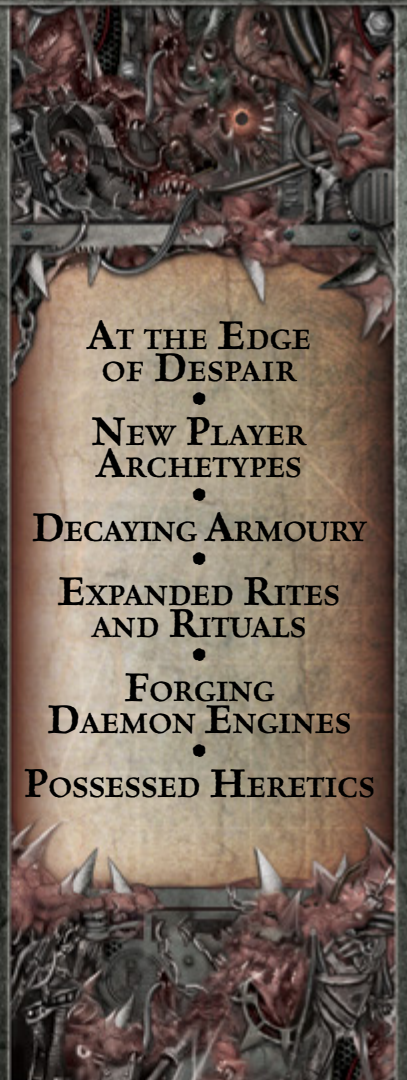
•
NEW PLAYER
ARCHETYPES

•
DECAYING ARMOURY

•
EXPANDED RITES
AND RITUALS

•
FORGING
DAEMON ENGINES

•
POSSESSED HERETICS



CHAPTER II: DEATH BRINGERS

"Why do you struggle so, little one, when even the very air you breathe holds the seeds of your eventual and everlasting destruction?"

—Crier of the Hordes of Nymeronh

Of all the Chaos Gods, Nurgle is most involved with the plights of the mortal realm. He is the Lord of Disease and Decay, and every living thing endures his ministrations before ultimately falling to corruption and ruin. A noble few face this death bravely and stoically, yet many more cling frantically to life in their eagerness to escape their fate. To these desperate individuals, Nurgle offers salvation through eternal stagnation and entropy in the form of copious Warp-spawned contagions that ravage the body and corrupt the soul. In return, Nurgle's diseased followers sing praises to the Plague God for his generous bounties while eagerly spreading their lord's afflictions. As the numbers of dead multiply and entire worlds drown beneath tides of filth and pestilence, Nurgle's power and influence grows until his daemonic servants burst forth into the material realm intent on spreading his plagues to every corner of the galaxy.

This Chapter of **THE TOME OF DECAY** introduces new Traitor Legions to the abhorrent hordes that dwell within the Screaming Vortex as well as vile new human and Chaos Space Marine Archetypes.

- **Plague Marine:** A warrior of Chaos whose foul afflictions aid him in spreading Nurgle's blights.
- **Veteran of the Long War:** A Chaos Space Marine that seeks only to destroy the hated Imperium.
- **Warpsmith:** A profane Techmarine whose mechanoid mastery is put to devastating use on the battlefield.
- **Writhing World Sorcerer-King:** A revolting sorcerer whose body is riddled with the same loathsome worms that infest his disturbing home world.
- **Death Priest of Mire:** A ferocious warrior dedicated to propagating his profane beliefs of corruption and death.
- **Plaguemeister:** A twisted apothecary whose unnatural obsession with disease makes him a deadly adversary.

Also included is an expanded armoury, rules for harbouring malevolent Warp entities as a Possessed, and profane new rites and rituals for crafting diabolical Daemon Engines.



A NOTE TO GAME MASTERS

These Archetypes are designed for more advanced players and represent powerful veterans of Chaos. Game Masters are encouraged to take this information into account before allowing players to use these Archetypes, and players should be aware that Game Masters might limit the use of these characters. Also, due to the relative potency of these Archetypes, it is recommended that Game Masters not grant additional starting experience to players using these characters, lest they have little room to develop after of character creation.

The Chaos Space Marine Archetypes introduced in this chapter are roughly equivalent to a beginning Chaos Space Marine character with an additional 3,600 experience points. The human characters are all roughly equivalent to a beginning human Disciple of Chaos with an additional 4,600 experience points. See pages 48 and 50 of the **BLACK CRUSADE CORE Rulebook** for starting abilities for Chaos Space Marines and human Heretics.



AT THE EDGE OF DESPAIR

"We have shattered our chains of bondage and cast down their treacherous lies! Now we are free, my brothers, free to extract our vengeance from their flesh! Let us repay them a thousand fold!"

—Khrengas the Spiteful,
Grand Defiler of the Gore-Spattered Fist

The Imperium of Man is the largest endeavour in humanity's long and largely forgotten history, encompassing millions of worlds and untold billions of subjects. This massive realm was forged during the legendary Great Crusade, when the Immortal Emperor led his armies across the stars in an unprecedented campaign of conquest and exploration. Yet this age of enlightenment and discovery was not meant to be, for Horus, greatest of the Space Marine Primarchs, betrayed his oaths of allegiance and led half the Space Marine Legions in a terrible civil war that tore the Imperium asunder. Though the Emperor eventually cast down the traitorous Warmaster in single combat and scattered his Legions, the cost would ultimately prove catastrophic for the fledgling Imperium.

For 10,000 years since those dark days the Imperium of Man has endured, despite the efforts of innumerable heretics, renegades, and vile xenos who seek to erode its authority from without as well as within. However, beneath its mighty facade, the Imperium stands on the brink of collapse. Following his confrontation with Horus, the wounded Emperor was interred in an arcane device known as the Golden Throne where he remains to this day, a withered and lifeless husk. Meanwhile, corruption, hypocrisy, and stagnation are rampant throughout the Imperium, while only the herculean efforts of its defenders and their faith in the Emperor hold the forces that assail humanity at bay. The most dangerous of these are the remnants of the Traitor Space Marine Legions that very nearly toppled the Imperium those many centuries ago; including the undying Death Guard, the cunning Iron Warriors, and the renamed Black Legion. They are all determined and deadly warriors, utterly devoted to their cause and the inevitable downfall of the Corpse-God and his realm.

THE DEATH GUARD

Though now considered one of the Imperium's most abhorrent foes, the Death Guard were once counted among the most relentless and resolute of the Emperor's warriors. The cryptic Stygian Scrolls claim the Legion hailed from the planet Barbarus, a toxic world wreathed in a perpetual poisonous fog. As a result, the planet's inhabitants became extremely resilient to their poisonous home world, a trait that would eventually give rise to the Death Guard's infamous ability to operate in even the most toxic warzones. This hardy constitution, combined with a grimly stoic demeanour and brutally efficient infantry tactics, made the Death Guard one of the most determined and reliable forces within the Great Crusade.

Yet when Horus led half the Space Marine Legions in rebellion against the Emperor, he was able to sway Mortarion, the Death Guard's pallid and grim Primarch, to join him in tearing to the ground all that his father had accomplished. What exactly motivated Mortarion to betray the Imperium is lost to history, yet he and his warriors eagerly joined the other traitors in their campaign of destruction, crossing into the Warp en masse to aid in the assault on Holy Terra.

However, shortly after their transition, the Death Guard were becalmed within the fickle Warp tides, while a strange and devastating plague of unprecedented virulence ravaged the Legion and their attendant fleet. Even the legendary physiologies of the Space Marines could not save them as one by one each of the Death Guard was overcome, their superhuman bodies bloated and distended as the foul contagion transformed them into shambling, diseased grotesques.

Yet none are believed to have suffered as greatly as Mortarion, who was forced to watch his progeny stumble in unending anguish through the disease choked confines of their helpless vessels without hope of escape or death. In desperation, Mortarion offered up his soul and the souls of the remaining Death Guard to the Warp in exchange for his Legion's salvation, and it was Nurgle, Lord of Disease and Decay, who answered his prayer, saving the Death Guard and ensuring their eternal damnation.

What eventually emerged from the Warp within their filth-covered plague ships were not the stoic and austere Death Guard of old, but the first and most deadly of the Plague Marines. Led by their Primarch, the transformed Legion burst forth upon the Emperor's Palace of Terra like a tide of putrid corruption, their disease-encrusted bulks and rust-covered weapons wreaking a devastating toll upon the Imperial defenders.



THE HERALDS OF DECAY

In the wake of Horus's defeat, the Death Guard retreated to the Eye of Terror alongside the other Traitor Legions, their steadfast demeanour allowing them to avoid the disarray and anarchy that afflicted many of their traitor brethren. Upon entering the Warp, they laid claim to a blighted world near the borders of reality now known as the Plague Planet. The Death Guard are said to dwell there still, and it is from this poisonous rock that the Legion continues to strike out at their Imperial enemies, their massive plague ships bursting with diseased followers eager to bring despair and desolation to mankind. Those insane and corrupted individuals who claim to have set foot upon it say it is a toxic world of corruption and pestilence whose skeletal ruler dwells within his wrought-iron bastion upon the world's highest peak.

Since their fall, the Legion has utterly dedicated itself to propagating Nurgle's corruption, its diseased fleets spewing from the Warp to spread his vile plagues across countless worlds. In battle, they are as utterly relentless as ever, inexorably advancing in the face of withering fire while using their rust-covered bolters and poisonous Plague Knives to brutally dispatch their foes. Their bloated and diseased bodies are immune to fear and pain, often allowing them to causally ignore wounds which would kill lesser men.

Throughout their centuries of raiding, the Legion has gradually split into smaller and smaller units, each led by a particularly deadly Champion of Nurgle in addition to the untold numbers of foetid, Warp-spawned servants that accompany them. In keeping with their corrupt heritage, the Death Guard primarily fight on foot, relying heavily on infantry tactics and their own diseased physiologies to overpower their enemies. Many of these repulsive warriors are the same traitors who burst forth from the Warp during the fabled Battle of Terra centuries ago, while others are more recent converts who have sworn allegiance to both Mortarion and his noxious patron.

Scattered warbands of Death Guard frequently operate within and around the Screaming Vortex, ever eager to reduce the many worlds surrounding those unnatural currents to stinking morasses of putrefaction. Though few in number, they frequently swell their ranks with denizens of the Vortex who wish to spread Grandfather Nurgle's bounty as well as the numerous Traitor Space Marines who have embraced the path of decay. Yet there is a change coming within the Vortex, with many isolated warbands uniting beneath the pestilent banner of a malevolent new champion who has emerged from the eternal warzones that surround the Calixis Sector.

Known only as Buorgdius, legend has it that he was once a proud captain of a Space Marine purgation force that was sent to facilitate the eradication of Chaos forces within the Acheron Salient of the Jericho Reach. After months of brutal campaigning, a rogue plague ship unexpectedly burst forth from the Warp and rammed his Strike Cruiser before vomiting its rotting warriors directly into the vessel's interior. It is said that the Captain fought with terrible fury, cutting down all manner of plague-ridden monstrosities while enduring the foul swarms of flies and noxious clouds of contagion that choked every corridor and assailed his superhuman frame.

By the time he reached the bridge, the mighty warrior could barely stand, while behind him his battle brothers lay dead or dying and the servants of Nurgle ran rampant throughout the hallowed halls of the venerable Strike Cruiser. The bloated Daemon-thing that confronted him within that necrotic bubo laughed at the weakened Captain's plight and raised his massive weapon to strike the killing blow. In that moment, the Captain despaired, crying out in anguish and pleading for the strength to kill his foe. Suddenly unhindered by the innumerable infections that festered within his body, the Captain struck out with renewed vigour, smiting his opponent and claiming his place at the plague ship's helm.

Now he is a Champion of Nurgle whose plague fleet plies the outer fringes of the Screaming Vortex, unleashing its revolting warriors against those unfortunate enough to fall afoul of their diseased and leprous hulks. In combat, Buorgdius leads the reanimated corpses of his former Space Marine brethren into battle while wielding a massive mace crafted from the diseased bones of his unholy predecessor, and dripping with repellent Warp energies. Afterward, his undead warriors stuff the innumerable dead and dying into the filthy, dank plague holds of his vessels in order that they may moulder in the foetid darkness. In this way, the champion recruits many of his mightiest warriors, and he is said to offer a place in his warband to any who will but supplicate themselves before the Lord of Decay.

THE BLACK LEGION

Since the time of Horus' betrayal, much of the Arch-Traitor's history has been expunged from Imperial records, while what little has survived is rare and jealously guarded. Yet before his fateful actions made his name a byword for sedition and catastrophe, Horus Lupercal was widely considered the greatest of the Primarchs. A master tactician and warrior, Horus was highly intelligent and charismatic, able to inspire the best in his fellow Primarchs while utilising their respective Legions in operations that suited their unique talents. Following his success against the Orks during the Ullanor Crusade, Horus was elevated to the newly created rank of Warmaster, while the Lunar Wolves, greatest of the Space Marine Legions, were renamed The Sons of Horus in his honour. As part of his new position, Horus was given overall command of the Emperor's Great Crusade and the hitherto unprecedented expansion of humanity's domain.

However, as the Emperor withdrew to Terra to continue his great work, Horus became disillusioned with his place within the Imperium, casting his lot and that of his Legion against the Emperor of mankind in the service of the Chaos Gods. Perhaps he resented a lord who seemed to prefer others to win his battles for him while he reaped the glory, or maybe Horus resented the worship which had sprung up around the Emperor as a living god. Many within his own Legion even claim a Daemon possessed Horus during those legendary times. Ultimately, the true motives behind Horus's betrayal died with him when the Emperor slew the Warmaster at the height of the infamous Battle of Terra; yet his treachery and the actions of those who joined him forever transformed humanity's fate.



DEATH TO THE FALSE EMPEROR!

The death of their Primarch was a traumatic blow for the Sons of Horus, who had always prided themselves on being the greatest of the Space Marine Legions. Upon hearing of their Primarch's fate, the Sons of Horus immediately fell back from the Siege of the Emperor's Palace, breaking ranks and retreating into the blackness of space with the body of their dead Warmaster. Such actions earned the Sons of Horus the enmity of all the other Traitor Space Marine Legions on that day, which would later return to haunt them.

Following their devastating loss, the Legion fled into the Eye of Terror where they remained among the most active of the Traitor Legions, frequently raiding Imperial space and openly courting the various powers and Daemons of the Warp. However, the legion soon found itself embroiled in various conflicts with their former allies, during which time conspirators defiled Horus's tomb and stole the Warmaster's corpse in order to clone the notorious leader. Furious at such wanton desecration of their beloved Primarch, the Sons of Horus swore allegiance to a new master: Abaddon of the First Company. Under Abaddon's leadership they renounced their Primarch and former heraldry, renaming themselves the Black Legion in memory of their shame before attacking and destroying the Warmaster's body, the research facility, and the wretched clones.

The Black Legion has fractured significantly over the centuries, splitting into numerous warbands of every conceivable size. Some owe their allegiance to heroes and officers from before the Great Betrayal, while others follow

newly emerged champions who have won favour through their nefarious deeds and violent acts. In addition, individual loyalties, old rivalries, and conflicting devotions to the Chaos Gods often lead to internal disputes within the Legion itself, while the Black Legion's penchant for daemonic possession only compounds such fragmentation.

Despite such divisions, the Black Legion is wholly united in its undying hatred of the Imperium, and has launched innumerable raids upon countless Imperial worlds in its efforts to sow mayhem and destruction. Whether acting autonomously or as part of a larger warband, each member of the Black Legion utilises a highly flexible tactical doctrine which enables them to adapt quickly to any combat situation. No tactic is too dangerous or weapon too terrible for these highly resourceful warriors, and many will go to any lengths to accomplish their objective. The legion is also known for its highly efficient chain of command, assuming that the current leader is able to enforce his position with the occasional display of strength and ruthlessness. One of the Black Legion's favourite tricks is to tear the throat out of the enemy by eliminating the enemy commander in a single swift and brutal strike.

In recent centuries, a number of Black Legion warbands have begun to operate out of the Screaming Vortex, launching devastating raids into the nearby sectors and warzones. Though many seem to be operating independently towards their own insane and self-serving ends, there is one warband in particular, led by one Hadaror the Ravager, whose power and influence are in the ascendant.



Hadaror is a Black Legion Captain whose warriors have wrought terrible havoc upon the beleaguered Imperial Forces of the Jericho Reach since the early days of that disastrous campaign. Since then his forces have continued to grow as Chaos Marines from many different Legions and backgrounds unite beneath his banner of hatred and malice. He does not seem to favour a particular Chaos God over another, preferring instead to offer devotions to the numerous powers to suit his needs. Despite such activity, his goals and purpose remain elusive, and whispers of his motivations are a frequent topic of rumours and widespread speculation amid the treacherous powers of the Vortex. Such questions might never be answered, however, as his ambitions and objectives are his own, and he commands fierce and unquestioning loyalty from those beneath his command.

Despite his motivations, his intense hatred of his former Adeptus Astartes brethren is undeniable, often leading him to abandon entire assaults and forfeit any gains at the slightest opportunity to engage Adeptus Astartes forces. Only during such engagements does the Ravager deign to set foot upon the field of battle, eagerly rending and tearing his superhuman adversaries limb from limb while screaming his defiance at the Corpse-God's followers. Such actions have led many to speculate that his sole motivation is to turn the entire front into a meat grinder in order to satiate his manifest hatred, a belief which only further swells his ranks.

THE WARMASTER REBORN

Among the countless enemies and traitors of the Imperium of Man, none inspires such bitterness, fear, and revulsion as the name Abaddon the Despoiler save perhaps that of the Arch-Traitor Horus himself. Following the Warmaster's defeat, it was Abaddon who ripped the fallen Tyrant's corpse from loyalist forces and disappeared with his cadaverous prize into the abyss of madness known as the Eye of Terror. When he finally resurfaced centuries later during his first Black Crusade, it was at the head of a tide of filth and corruption the likes of which had not been seen since the Emperor walked among his subjects. Abaddon has since amassed eleven more crusades, each gaining him greater power and influence among the scattered forces of Chaos. Now his thirteenth Black Crusade threatens to overtake the Cadian Gate, and in doing so secure a path to the greatest prize of all: Holy Terra.

THE IRON WARRIORS

Before their fall during the fabled Horus Heresy, the Iron Warriors were among the Imperium's finest siege breakers, ruthlessly efficient in all aspects of static warfare and combat engineering. In addition to their exceptional combat skills, each possessed an innate affinity for technology and a cold and pragmatic logic inherited from their Primarch Perturabo, a warrior of exceptional skill and strategic insight. What records remain of their tactics typically describe brutally effective siege campaigns in which the Iron Warriors systematically silenced the defender's guns before relentlessly storming the weakened defences and slaughtering the defenders without a shred of remorse. Blood ran thick on these worlds, for the strongest ramparts could not stand before the wrath of iron.

So effective were these tactics that the Iron Warriors became the automatic choice for every difficult siege mission, and it is highly possible that the strain of these ruthless campaigns eventually had a destructive effect on their morale. What's more, their frequent deployments as siege specialists and garrison soldiers means that precious little is mentioned of their deeds during those mythical days, an oversight which doubtless contributed to their eventual betrayal. Indeed, many chronicles only mention the Iron Warriors in passing, if at all, and most give little account of their actions during the many momentous achievements in which their expertise proved instrumental.

What part Horus played in such matters shall never be known, yet the charismatic Warmaster was ultimately able to manipulate the Iron Warriors into joining his rebellion against the Imperium of Man. Perhaps he was able to exploit some flaw within the Iron Warrior's indoctrination or manipulate Perturabo's anger at the marginalisation of his Legion's achievements. Whatever the reason, the Iron Warriors were quick to join Horus's ranks, and Perturabo himself even helped supervise the decimation of his father's titanic fortifications during the Siege of the Emperor's Palace.

NO MERCY, NO QUARTER

Following the Warmaster's defeat, the Iron Warriors retreated to the many fortress worlds that their garrison forces had overtaken in the wake of Horus's betrayal in preparation to stave off the loyalists' inevitable assault. They did not have to wait long. The resulting campaign was a brutal and protracted affair. After years of intense fighting, the Imperial Fists, with support from their Ultramarine allies, drove their longstanding rivals from the last of their strongholds. Their home world destroyed and their empire in ruins, the Iron Warriors finally retreated into the Eye of Terror where they continue to dwell to this day.

Despite the many centuries of exposure to the madness of the Warp, the Iron Warriors have retained much of their organisation, though the centuries of conflict have noticeably fractured the original Grand Companies. In addition, at the time of Horus's betrayal, the Legion was scattered across dozens of fronts and hundreds of worlds, meaning no one truly knows the Legion's size and strength during those turbulent days. Now they operate in deployments of various sizes, ranging from small detachments sent to aid their fellow Chaos Space Marines to Grand Companies capable of besieging huge swathes of Imperial space and responsible for the deaths and suffering of billions. The largest of these forces owe their allegiance to powerful Warsmiths: veteran warriors whose tactical genius combined with their hatred of the Imperium makes them formidable and vindictive opponents.

Iron Warriors excel at all manner of siege craft and demolitions, and are all highly proficient with various patterns of weapons technology, either preserved from their glorious past or pilfered from the lifeless ruins left in their wake. In battle, they rely heavily on their firearms and other weapons of war, preferring to allow their devastating artillery barrages and cruel field fortifications to do their work for them. When an opening presents itself, the Iron Warriors are quick to exploit it, but only when the moment is right.

Throughout their campaign of destruction, the Legion has acquired various weapons of siege warfare which they employ to great effect including Termite Tunnellers, Dreadclaw Assault Boats, and numerous other transports and artillery pieces. Such war machines are highly valuable to the Traitor Legion, and marauding Iron Warriors are always quick to scavenge additional equipment whenever possible. There are even reports of the Legion operating alongside various Chaos Titan Legions including the Forsaken Reavers that have long plagued the Calixis and surrounding sectors.

The degree of mutation among the Iron Warriors varies greatly between individuals. Many are almost unchanged save their own alterations and the formation of horns, spikes, and other such changes that accompany prolonged exposure to the corruption of the Warp. This uniformity is often a product of the Iron Warriors' mentality, their pragmatic minds preferring a bionic arm to an unwanted Warp-spawned tentacle. Such propensities, as well as the presence of large numbers of war machines, also explains the high numbers of Warsmiths originating from this mechanically inclined Legion. Indeed, it is not uncommon for particularly powerful Warsmiths to become leaders in their own right, thereby granting them the opportunity to field their nightmarish creations at will.

Within the Screaming Vortex the Iron Warriors are highly valued allies, often commanding great wealth or tribute from any warlords who wish to gain access to the powerful weapons in their possession. They are without mercy or conscience, raining death upon their enemies and innocents alike with ruthless efficiency and leaving only devastation and the bodies of the slain in their wake. Like many renegades who dwell within the Screaming Vortex, their motivations are entirely self-serving, and many pit opposing powers against one another in order to exploit the various conflicts that rage throughout the sector for their own secular gain.

The most prolific of these callous individuals is Warsmith Madrydon Drados who, along with his brutal Shatter Corps, seeks to destroy the Imperium's many fortifications and fortresses throughout the nearby sectors. He believes that without such fortifications the Imperium will quickly topple beneath its own weight and be laid open to the numerous marauders and forces of Chaos that surround it. To Drados, such bastions are personal affronts to his own abilities that serve only to sustain the power of the decadent and corrupt weaklings who cower behind them.

In addition to the numerous warriors beneath his command, Madrydon's warband also possesses a great many powerful war machines recently liberated from the nearby Spinward Front. These once noble machines now skitter and stomp beside the Warsmith's armies as blasphemous siege constructs or terrifying Daemon Engines, their pristine forms twisted beyond recognition thanks to the efforts of Warsmith Gracix.



PLAGUE MARINE

"I have wandered amid the decomposing corpses of my master's Garden, and drank deep from the stagnant pools of corruption at his feet. Soon you shall see what true power means."

—Plague Captain Despoidiol, Champion of Grief

The Lord of Decay has many servants that dwell within the swirling eddies of the Screaming Vortex. Among the greatest of these are the Plague Marines, warriors whose putrid appearance is matched only by their determination and unnatural resilience. While the Death Guard are the most notorious of these vile individuals, not every Traitor Marine that follows the path of decay owes his allegiance to that polluted lineage, for Nurgle's corrupt abundance is available to all who prove worthy of his favour. Yet regardless of their origins, the denizens of the Vortex often give these grotesque brutes a wide berth, as each is always eager to share their bounty of disease and death.

PLAYING A PLAGUE MARINE

Plague Marines are amongst the most terrifying and relentless of Nurgle's servants, undaunted in the face of death and heedless of all but the most devastating wounds. Their rusty armour and weapons are coated in filth, pus, and other foulness, while rotting organs burst from rents in their distended forms, and teeming hordes of insects burrow beneath their pallid, leprous flesh. Such is the extent of the decay that wracks their diseased frames that their crumbling armour has long since fused with the decayed flesh beneath, while the very air surrounding them is a cloying miasma of disease.

Yet, despite their ghoulish appearance, these warriors are far from dead. Instead they are living embodiments of the promise of corruption and decay within all living things, a gift of their foul patron in return for their devotion to the propagation of his numerous contagions and poxes. However, though many Chaos Space Marines may dedicate themselves to the Plague Father's service, only those truly worthy of his favour receive the dreadful blessings required to transform them into a Plague Marine.

Many receive their abhorrent favours in exchange for deplorable acts of adulation or through pacts with powerful plague sorcerers and other foul servants of Nurgle. Others embrace the path of decay out of desperation, their disease-addled minds choosing servitude over agony and death at the hands of their afflictions. In the end, such motivations are secondary to the unholy task of spreading Nurgle's sinister bounty, and each Plague Marine embraces his devotions with inexorable energy.

In battle, Plague Marines fight without respite or mercy, their bloated bodies and legendary physiology rendering them immune to nearly every physical limitation as they

eagerly kill in the Plague God's name. Most prefer short-ranged engagements where they may more readily appreciate the necrotic effects of the poxes and contagions they spread, all while revelling in the disparaging moans of the dying.

To a Plague Marine, such cries of agony are praise for the virulence of their dark lord's works, while every cry for mercy is yet another opportunity to expand their glorious host. For this reason, some prefer merely to wound their victims so that they can fully experience the agonies of Nurgle's generosity, while for others there is no greater satisfaction than to watch their enemies dissolve into a diseased mass of liquefied flesh.

Plague Marines are rightly feared throughout the Imperium as deadly adversaries whose dreadful appearance directly mirrors the rotten soul within. As such, many warlords within the Vortex find their skills, relentless determination, and

resilience to physical damage highly useful on the field of battle.

However, a Plague Marine's sole drive is the propagation of his malevolent patron's pestilences, so it is always this inexorable purpose to which his rotting mind returns.



PLAGUE MARINE

A Plague Marine must be a Chaos Space Marine.

Characteristic Bonus: Plague Marines –10 Agility, +10 Toughness, +5 Willpower, +15 Corruption Points, and +7 Infamy.

Starting Skills: Awareness +10, Common Lore (Any One), Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) *or* (Heresy) *or* (Psykers), Intimidate +10, Parry +10.

Starting Talents: Ancient Warrior *or* Die Hard, Bolter Drill, Exotic Weapon Training (Plague Knife), Fearless, Iron Jaw, Hardy, Hip Shooting, Rapid Reload, Sure Strike *or* Deadeye Shot, Takedown *or* Blind Fighting.

Starting Gear: Legion Boltgun with 2 magazines, Plague Knife, 3 Blight Grenades, 2 Legion Krak Grenades.

Wounds: 18+1d5.

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

Abominable Physiology: The numerous parasites and virulent diseases that eat away at a Plague Marine's armour and liquefy his diseased flesh also make him unnaturally resistant to harm. A Plague Marine never suffers Damage or other negative effects from Diseases, poisons, or the Toxic Quality unless he chooses to suffer these effects (although he can still be infected by Diseases as normal, and can spread them to others).

Hideous Resilience: Plague Marines have been known to walk unflinching through terrible fire and shrug off mighty blows that would cleave other Space Marines in twain. As a Reaction, a Plague Marine may make a **Difficult (–10) Toughness Test**. If he succeeds, he reduces the Damage from the next hit he suffers before the beginning of his next Turn by 1 per Degree of Success he scores on the Test. If he reduces the Damage to 0 this way, he gains the Fear (1) Trait to the foe whose attack he so easily withstood.

Infectious Miasma: Plague Marines are revolting testaments to the horrific bounties that await those who embrace the Lord of Decay, their bodies dripping with foul pestilences and contagions that hinder their opponents in combat. A Plague Marine may spend an Infamy point to release the swarms of bloat-flies, corpse-gases, and other vile contagions housed within his bloated frame. For the next 1d5+1 Rounds, at the start of the Plague Marine's Turn, each other character within 10 metres of the Plague Marine suffers a single hit for 1d10 Energy Damage with the Toxic Quality, ignoring armour that is not environmentally sealed.

Plague Marines begin play Aligned to Nurgle.

PLAGUE MARINES IN THE VORTEX

Plague Marines are among the most revolting and vile of the Chaos Space Marines that inhabit the Screaming Vortex. Yet to those who revel in the glories of the Carrion Lord, these putrid warriors rank among Nurgle's most blessed servants, and most find willing allies within the Vortex's most wretched and polluted throngs.

The following are examples of these repulsive Traitor Space Marines from within the Screaming Vortex and their despicable practices of pestilence and wicked devotion.

Germinatoris: One of the most vital positions within the Adeptus Astartes is that of the Apothecary, a warrior medic tasked with harvesting the precious gene-seed from the fallen in order that the chapter may endure. Yet within the Screaming Vortex there exists a coterie of Plague Marines who grotesquely mirror their noble counterparts. Like carrion feeders, they prowl the battlefield, plundering the gene-seed from any fallen Traitor Space Marines they can find and infecting them with the viscous fluids that ooze from their rotting innards in order to ensure the propagation of Nurgle's putrefying influence.

Forsaken Host: Among the many tales of terror and death found within the Screaming Vortex is that of the Forsaken Host, the solitary survivor of a battle which scoured an unknown planet of life during a forgotten age. Legend says a host of fat, buzzing flies accompanies him—one for each of the fallen during that fateful battle—and that their collective buzzing tears at the sanity of those who hear it, for it is filled with the suffering of billions. Now he is a walking avatar of the devastation of war whose followers relentlessly seek new souls to add to the teeming hordes that swirl about him with ghoulish intensity.

Emissaries of the Wasting Death: The Plague Marines of the Wasting Death are particularly feared among the many denizens of the Screaming Vortex, for their very presence brings with it untold suffering and privation. Wherever they tread the ground shrivels and cracks beneath their feet, and even the heartiest and most resilient creatures shrivel and perish as they draw near. Contact with the malefic air of deprivation that surrounds these desiccated warriors irreparably scars those who survive, often manifesting in incessant pangs of unquenchable thirst and indescribable hunger that lasts for years after the dreadful encounter is a distant memory.

VETERAN OF THE LONG WAR

"The Emperor is dead and his armies mere chaff before the might of Chaos! This day I shall drink my fill of misery and death."

—Gorgamnon the Blooded, at the commencement of the Hell Mouth Incursion

Since the dark days of the Horus Heresy, the Imperium has endured innumerable attacks from the forces of the dreaded Chaos Space Marines. Yet among these Traitor Legions, there are those for whom the perpetual war to destroy the False Emperor's realm has become an all-consuming madness. These are the most dangerous of the Imperium's foes, many of whom eventually make their way to the turbulent Screaming Vortex, either as part of a grand design or due to the mysterious machinations of the Warp. Others are forged within the conflicts that smoulder ceaselessly within and around the Vortex itself, their singular hatred of their former masters driving them to lash out at both Imperial and Chaos devotees with equally savage aggression.

PLAYING A VETERAN OF THE LONG WAR

Veterans of the Long War are highly skilled and lethal warriors whose sole motivation is their undying hatred for the Imperium of Man. The potential catalysts for such animosity are legion, ranging from recent injustices and schisms to the chaotic aftermath of the infamous Horus Heresy itself. Many can no longer even recall the impetus behind their unrelenting malice as the innumerable horrors of trafficking with Daemons and other foul Warp spawn have completely shattered their debased minds. For others the fickle nature of time within the Immaterium makes the passage of whole aeons entirely subjective and ensures their unbearable scorn loses none of its intensity over the centuries.

In addition to the corrupt legacy of the False Emperor, the Veterans of the Long War hold further animosity for their loyalist counterparts: the Adeptus Astartes. On the surface, such abhorrence may result from any number of occurrences, yet there is often a darker side to their malice, an intensity borne of individual self-loathing and the subconscious knowledge of their own eternal damnation. Such emotions fester like rancorous wounds within the minds of these terrible warriors, while their never-ending desire to see the Imperium burn ever gnaws at the last vestiges of their sanity.

Veterans of the Long War are highly accomplished killers whose centuries of experience and tactical insight make them incredibly dangerous and unpredictable foes. Some strike out boldly and violently against their adversaries, while others choose instead to weaken the Imperium from within by spreading confusion and madness in their wake. Though their tactics and methods may vary, their combat prowess is a sight to behold as their singular skills and murderous mentality drive them to commit ever-more atrocious acts of cruelty and spite.

Concepts such as honour and restraint are entirely ancillary to these corrupt combatants, and no Daemon is too vile, no pact too desperate, and no knowledge too terrible to dissuade them in their abhorrent intentions—the utter destruction of the Imperium of Mankind and the total ruination of its works!

Despite the dangers associated with these single-minded killers, numerous warlords and raiders within the Screaming Vortex are eager to enlist the aid of such veteran warriors. Those who manage to rein in their tenacious charges are often able to reap the tremendous benefits of their centuries of tactical insight, combat expertise, and sheer bloody-minded determination. However, every leader must always be cautious not to hinder the Veteran's endless quest for vengeance, for to do so invites the wrath of these eternally vengeful fiends.



VETERAN OF THE LONG WAR

A Veteran of the Long War must be a Chaos Space Marine.

Characteristic Bonus: +5 Willpower, +5 Weapon Skill *or* Ballistic Skill, +15 Corruption Points, and +10 Infamy.

Starting Skills: Awareness +10, Charm *or* Deceive *or* Intimidation +10, Common Lore (Any One), Dodge +10 *or* Parry +10, Forbidden Lore (The Inquisition) *or* (Codex Astartes) *or* (Mutants) *or* (Heresy), Forbidden Lore (Warp) *or* (Psykers) *or* (Daemonology) *or* (Pirates), Intimidation, Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis), Survival *or* Command.

Starting Talents: Air of Authority *or* Disturbing Voice, Ancient Warrior, Enemy (Adeptus Astartes), Hatred (Adeptus Astartes, Imperial Guard), Jaded, Peer (Traitor Legions, Warlords), Rapid Reload *or* Lightning Reflexes, Unshakeable Will.

Starting Gear: Legion Bolt Pistol with 2 Magazines, 1 Legion Frag Grenade, 1 Legion Krak Grenade, Trophy Rack.

Wounds: 15+1d5.

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

The Eternal Enemy: Veterans of the Long War represent the greatest of the Imperium's fears, waging war on the very foundations of Imperial faith using skills and tactics garnered from innumerable battles spanning countless worlds. A Veteran of the Long War selects his Starting Alignment at Character Creation. He then acquires any one Special Ability and a single piece of equipment from any other Chaos Space Marine Archetype with a starting Alignment that matches his own in addition to the Special Abilities listed here.

Abhorrence Unchained: Every Veteran of the Long War harbours an undying hatred of the Imperium that fuels his murderous rampages while sowing the seeds of his inevitable damnation. Across the battlefield of ages he strides, a blood-soaked nightmare whose steps are thunder and whose battle-roar is death. Whenever a Veteran of the Long War slays a foe for whom he has the associated Hatred Talent, he may make an **Ordinary (+10) Infamy Test**. If he succeeds, he gains the Fear (2) Trait against that type of foe and his attacks inflict +1 Damage (to a maximum of +10) against enemies of that type until the end of the encounter.

Veterans of the Long War begin play Aligned to the Chaos God of their choice or Unaligned.

VETERANS OF THE LONG WAR IN THE VORTEX

Few Chaos Space Marines are worthy of the title Veteran of the Long War, most either dying in battle or becoming utterly consumed by their own blasphemous and perilous pursuits. Yet for the multitudes that fall, a select few endure, their hatred of the Imperium and desire to wreak fear and carnage driving them to commit ever more shocking acts of destruction and cruelty.

The following are infamous examples of these exceptionally determined and darkly disturbed warriors known to inhabit the Screaming Vortex.

Reflections of Torment: Throughout the Imperium's war-torn histories are countless legends of vanished ships and hosts of warriors lost to the hazards of Warp travel. However, not all thus lost had the good fortune to die. Some instead wander the Empyrean for time out of mind, their physical forms and ancient wargear utterly transformed and entirely corrupted by direct exposure to the malefic influence of the aether. Beneath these warriors' gibbering madness lies a single decipherable motivation: a desperate and inescapable desire to wreak vengeance upon the Emperor that abandoned them and kept them so ignorant of the true power of the Warp.

The Chosen of Heiros: These sadistic killers once numbered among Abaddon's mightiest warriors and are responsible for countless atrocities during his infamous Black Crusades. Each had their own reasons for abandoning their villainous master and fleeing to the Screaming Vortex, yet all burn with an unquenchable desire to march to war beneath banners of hate and destruction. Their centuries of experience, ferocious tempers, and predilection towards daemonic possession and mental instability make them a truly menacing foe.

The Shards of Enmity: The so-called Shards of Enmity are the remnants of a heretical Adeptus Astartes Chapter that was declared Purgatus following the subjugation of Cataegis IV. Though a combined Space Marine fleet subsequently massacred the entire expeditionary force, what actually transpired once Imperial forces penetrated the cavernous nadirs of those snow-capped mountains remains unknown. However, a scattered few renegades managed to escape the Imperium's wrath and have since been sighted within the Screaming Vortex, where they plot vengeance on the accursed Imperium that betrayed them.

WARPSMITH

"On the fifth day the bastions fell, and those accursed techno-monsters entered the northern hab districts. The screams haunt me still."

—Excerpt from the statement of Corporal Vegrundur, prior to his execution for Dereliction of Duty

Many warbands make extensive use of the infamous Chaos Warpsmiths who labour ceaselessly within the scattered Warp Forges and towering Chaos Foundries of the Screaming Vortex. These macabre metallurgists have begun to surface in ever increasing numbers as the Vortex's inhabitants grow ever more brazen in their wanton attacks against the Corpse-God's domain. Yet these heartless individuals are not to be trusted, for the only remaining ambition within each of their mechanical minds is the extermination of the frailties of humanity.

PLAYING A WARPSMITH

Warpsmiths are Chaos Space Marines who have embraced the use of bionics and other more devious enhancements to rid themselves of the frailties of the flesh. They are powerful servants of the ruinous powers who frequently serve their malevolent patrons through the creation of horrific engines of war and the maintenance of the vehicles and wargear of the corrupt Traitor Legions. Most trace their origins to the enigmatic priesthood of Mars, either through their former service as a loyalist Techmarine or as a result of some schism from the rigid dogma of the Machine Cult. Yet the paths to damnation are many, and not all Warpsmiths owe their genesis to such clandestine beginnings.

Regardless, these Chaos Space Marines are united in their adversity to weakness, and are all completely obsessed with expunging their physical frailties. They are more machine than flesh, most little more than a brain and spinal cord housed within a mechanical construct resembling the terrifying visage of a Chaos Space Marine. Many are also quite fond of other, less subtle enhancements, frequently sporting numerous mechatendrils tipped with grasping pincer claws, shearing chainblades, fusion blasters, and other vicious weapons that writhe with seemingly unnatural life. No price is too extreme to these inhuman deviants, and most willingly sacrifice everything in order to reforge themselves into their new twisted mechanical forms.

Warpsmiths are master artisans and pioneers in the insane and blasphemous art of Mechamorphosis, often boasting a depth of knowledge comparable to even the most accomplished of their Space Marine counterparts. Yet instead of worshiping and revering technology, a Warpsmith strives to corrupt and subjugate it, twisting the sacred forms and functions of their captive machines to fit their own twisted designs. Chief among these are the infamous Daemon Engines of Chaos, including the dreaded Maulerfiends, Forgefiends, and other unholy fusions of sorcery and technology that plague the Imperium.

Most Warpsmiths are highly pragmatic when it comes to interacting with the various warlords and other malign powers of the Screaming Vortex, often forming alliances not out of some misplaced sense of loyalty, but rather as a way to advance their own profane agenda. Others hold no pretence to allegiances of any kind, openly viewing their fellow servants of chaos as weak-minded and flawed fools unworthy of their cooperation. However, those Warlords able to secure the aid of these treacherous individuals often find their extraordinary technological proficiency highly beneficial in their campaigns, provided they prove their usefulness to these cruelly logical and debased Warp-wrights.



WARPSMITH

A Warpsmith must be a Chaos Space Marine.

Characteristic Bonus: Warpsmiths gain +5 Intelligence, +5 Toughness, +15 Corruption Points, and +9 Infamy.

Starting Skills: Command *or* Trade (Armourer), Common Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus, Tech), Deception *or* Scrutiny, Forbidden Lore (Adeptus Mechanicus), Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) *or* (The Warp), Linguistics (Techna-Lingua), Medicae, Scholastic Lore (Occult), Tech-Use, Security *or* Tech-Use +10.

Starting Traits: Mechanicus Implants.

Starting Talents: Ancient Warrior *or* Orthoproxy, Cold Hearted *or* Resistance (Fear), Disturbing Voice *or* Sound Constitution, Enemy (Adeptus Mechanicus), Mechadendrite Use, Meditation *or* Total Recall, Rapid Reload *or* Combat Sense, Technical Knock, Unshakeable Will.

Starting Gear: 1 Mechadendrite *or* Dendrite Blade, 1 Mechatendril, 2 Good Craftsmanship Cybernetics, Fallen Magos Power Axe, Luminen Capacitors *or* Ferric Lure Implants, Dataslate.

Wounds: 15+1d5.

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

Binaric Curse: With a few muttered words of techno-arcane power, a Warpsmith can place a malediction upon a weapon, making it recoil against its wielder. As a Half Action, a Warpsmith may spend an Infamy Point to curse one weapon or other contraption of roughly equal complexity within 10 metres. If it is a weapon, it gains the Overheats or Unbalanced Weapon Quality until the end of the encounter. If it is another piece of technology, it falters or fails in some way (as determined by the GM).

Cybernetic Dominion: A Warpsmith rules over his cybernetic thralls with an iron fist, and their loyalty to him is stronger than the curse-wrought steel that girds them. A Warpsmith's Minions that possess the Machine Trait gain +10 Loyalty.

Master of Mechamorphosis: Warpsmiths are masters of the profane rites of forging unique and terrifying Daemon Engines to suit their own insane ends. Once an appropriate shell for a Daemon Engine is obtained, a Warpsmith can fashion the vehicle into a more suitable form to house a creature of the Warp, thereby granting a +10 Sympathy Modifier during the Ritual of Binding. The time required to forge this construct is subject to the Warpsmith's designs and the resources available, and additional Skill Tests might be required as the GM sees fit. Further, a Warpsmith can spend an Infamy Point to commune with a captive Machine Spirit when attempting to channel the Daemon into its new form, granting an additional +20 Bonus to the Binding Ritual. *Warpsmiths begin play Unaligned.*

WARPSMITHS IN THE VORTEX

The Legions of Chaos harbour many abominations and nightmarish war machines within their ranks, and the warriors of the Screaming Vortex are no exception. Such monstrosities often owe their genesis to the enigmatic and inhuman Warpsmiths whose efforts to usurp the realm of man with unholy flesh and steel strain the limits of sanity and leave little doubt as to their true devotions.

The following are examples of the numerous technomancers that inhabit the Screaming Vortex and the diabolical foundries in which they labour.

Scrap Reclamatrix: The Scrap Reclamatrix is an unholy abomination of Warpcraft and machine constructed from a nightmarish amalgamation of salvage, Daemon, and vat-grown flesh. Its skeletal form resembles a half-decayed corpse of some prehistoric leviathan whose demoniac bellows of scrap-code shake the very foundations of its blasphemous birthing chambers. Its throng of Warpsmith attendants feed this revolting construct the remnants of captured vehicles, fallen comrades, and other salvaged scrap in order to fabricate disturbing new engines of destruction.

Tabernacle of Decay: Within the Vortex lurks an insidious faction of Warpsmiths that takes immense joy in unleashing terrifying combinations of plague-riddled flesh and steel upon those yet to experience the wonders of decay. They are dreadful apparitions of oxidization and filth, their bodies concealed beneath moth-eaten robes and their every slime-covered orifice dribbling bile, maggots, and other foul vermin. Deep within the rusted and corroded bowels of their citadel of putrefaction, this necrotic order carries out its malefic intent: baptising its creations in swirling pools of noxious bile and rotten flesh.

Heterodact Syni-Thralls: Of the many avenues of study deemed heretical within the rigid doctrines of the Mechanicum, the most reviled is research pertaining to the blasphemous creation of artificial intelligences. However, rumours of such studies are rife within the Screaming Vortex, particularly among those who seek to eradicate all non-mechanical life in the galaxy via the enigmatic Heterodact Array. The mechanoid devotees of this heretical order are little more than soulless puppets to their ruthlessly inhuman masters, relentlessly marching forward with unnatural spasms of involuntarily animation as their manic cackling and occasional pleas for deliverance ring out across the battlefield.

WRITHING WORLD SORCERER-KING

"Observe the squirming maggot. In its simplicity there is purpose; in filth, there is potential. What the ignorant call vermin are in fact the implacable heralds of inexorable decay."

—177th canto of the Forbidden Treatises of Memniyth

One of the most disturbing locations within the Screaming Vortex is the Writhing World, a planet whose primitive human inhabitants wander amidst continent-sized tendrils of undulating flesh beneath the merciless rule of the great Biomancer Lords. The most powerful such denizens are the Sorcerer-Kings, potent psykers whose massive citadels scurry endlessly across the planet's surface at their master's bidding. Occasionally one of these powerful individuals will depart this decaying world, bartering passage among the various vessels that traverse the endless void. Though their reasons for these journeys are their own, their considerable power and arcane lore make them powerful allies despite the apparent danger of harbouring such vile wretches.

PLAYING A WRITHING WORLD SORCERER-KING

Every Writhing World Sorcerer-King is a highly skilled and learned sorcerer who has dedicated his life to the path of decay as well as other perilous Warp-magiks and forbidden lore. Most are off-worlders who have journeyed to this paradise of death and rebirth to expand their necromantic abilities and commune with the Plague Father, while others are indigenous huskmen whose profane psychic abilities set them apart from their tribal brethren.

Like the planet on which they dwell, Writhing World Sorcerer-Kings are infested with countless worms, maggots, and other wretched vermin which weave and burrow throughout skin and muscle. This revolting display of corruption is actually the Sorcerer-Kings' own doing, as such creatures allow their host a greater degree of control over their blasphemous disciplines while acting as foci for the unholy energies that course through the sorcerer's twisted body. The most powerful such necromancers are barely human, their ragged bodies bursting with countless bloated insects that writhe amidst the decayed remnants of their flyblown flesh.

As the Lord of Rot, Nurgle is an obvious patron for such vile psykers, though most are schooled in additional paths of power as well. Further, their macabre practices create an unwholesome sympathy with the many grotesque parasites that constitute Nurgle's domain, thereby allowing a Sorcerer-King a greater degree of influence over Nurgle's multifarious maledictions, which they use to dominate the local parasites and huskmen alike.

The most remarkable examples are the great crawling citadels whose rippling edifices heave with the same repulsive tendrils that pervade the Writhing World itself. Such manifest feats of sorcery are testaments to the skill and temperaments of their creators, though most pale in comparison to the ambulatory bastions of the dreaded Biomancer Lords. Regardless, Sorcerer-Kings are fiercely competitive when it comes to their terrifying creations, often unleashing them against each other in titanic struggles of writhing destruction.

Most Sorcerer-Kings spend their time reshaping their immense sanctuaries or roaming the planet's surface in search of additional insights into the mysterious origins of their home world. Others instead seek to further refine their abilities so that they might gain the attention of the powerful Biomancer Lords in the hopes of eventually ruling their heretical brethren, or perhaps even spreading their noxious influence to untainted, new worlds. A vicious few even choose to prey on each other for the power they seek, ripping their victim's knowledge directly from their worm-infested, rotting minds.



WRITHING WORLD SORCERER-KING

A Writhing World Sorcerer-King must be Human.

Characteristic Bonus: +5 Toughness, +5 Intelligence, +5 Willpower, +1d10+15 Corruption Points, and +9 Infamy.

Starting Skills: Awareness, Charm *or* Deceive *or* Commerce, Common Lore (Writhing World), Dodge *or* Parry, Forbidden Lore (Psykers), Forbidden Lore (The Warp) *or* (Psykers) +10, Intimidate, Inquiry *or* Interrogation, Linguistics (Chaos Marks) *or* Logic *or* Scholastic Lore (Cryptology), Scholastic Lore (Occult) *or* (Astromancy) *or* (Legend), Psyniscience.

Starting Traits: Psyker.

Starting Talents: Psy Rating 3, Up to 500 xp worth of Psychic Powers chosen from the Unaligned, Divination, Telepathy, *or* Telekinesis Disciplines plus 300 xp chosen from any of the above *or* the Nurgle Powers (see **Chapter VI: Psychic Powers** in the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook), Corpus Conversion, Die Hard, Hardy, Jaded, Resistance (Psychic Powers, Fear), Unshakeable Will *or* Strong Minded, Weapon Training (Primary, SP), Weapon Training (Las) *or* (Shock).

Starting Gear: Good Craftsmanship Laspistol *or* Stub Revolver, Force Staff *or* Neural Whip, Flak Cloak *or* Best Quality Chainmail Coat, Flesh-Bound Grimoire (filled with wicked lore).

Wounds: 8 +1d5.

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

Verminous Necromancer: The Sorcerer-Kings of the Writhing World are powerful psykers whose parasitic maladies further augment their profane abilities. When determining his Psychic Strength (see page 206 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook), a Sorcerer-King counts as Unbound. A Writhing World Sorcerer-King also counts his Psy Rating as 1 higher when attempting to manifest Psychic Powers Aligned to Nurgle.

Worm Master Supreme: Writhing World Sorcerer-Kings are infamous for their ability to weave the countless parasites that squirm throughout their bodies into writhing constructs of segmented flesh. A Writhing World Sorcerer-King can psychically summon one of these gestalt creatures by making a **Difficult (–10) Willpower Test** as a Full Action. If he succeeds, he calls forth one Writhing Swarm (see page 103), which follows his orders and acts during his Turn. For every Degree of Success he scores on the Test beyond the first, increase the Writhing Swarm's Wounds by 10. He can disperse the swarm as a Half Action or Reaction. At the beginning of each of his Turns during which a swarm is active, the Writhing World Sorcerer-King must dedicate a Half Action to maintaining it or suffer 1d5 Rending Damage ignoring armour and Toughness Bonus as the creatures within him rip free to join the ravening host of invertebrates.

Writhing World Sorcerer-Kings begin play Aligned to Nurgle.

WRITHING WORLD SORCERER-KINGS IN THE VORTEX

Most Writhing World Sorcerer-Kings choose to penetrate the noxious atmosphere of this disturbingly corrupt planet, and many eventually chose to depart it again. Their reasons for doing so are as varied as the individuals themselves, yet each carries with them a measure of the putrefaction which taints this unnatural world as well as numerous scars from their time amidst its sordid landscape.

The following are examples of Sorcerer-Kings whose cruelty and prodigious sorcerous abilities have earned them infamy throughout the Screaming Vortex.

Grubenth, Lord of the Skies: The seemingly endless throngs of bottle flies that cover the skies of the Writhing World with intriguing patterns and swirling manifestations of disturbing logic hold a peculiar fascination to Nurgle's annointed. Within the Vortex, no one is more knowledgeable about such displays than Grubenth, whose insane, incessant mumblings seem eerily reminiscent of the low droning of those massive swarms. His bloated body and multi-winged stronghold host thousands of the squirming maggots that mirror in these enthralling formations, supposedly **allowing** him to tap into the otherworldly consciousness drifting idly overhead.

The Gurgeon Mite: The terrifying Gurgeon Mite is the creation of an ancient and esoteric Sorcerer-King who long-ago sought the secrets that lie buried at the Writhing World's core. This myriapod citadel ceaselessly tunnels beneath the planet's segmented exterior, instigating deadly convulsions and emerging at random to feed before quickly scrabbling beneath the slimy, quivering surface. The actual depth achieved by this monstrous creature, as well as the secrets it has uncovered, are sources of endless speculation.

Leach King Hesperash: Hesperash is a cantankerous necromancer whose vicious, fleshy parasites consume the bodies of his victims and absorb their knowledge for his own nefarious gains. His writhing citadel resembles a hydra of ancient legend with numerous palisades each ending in a massive undulating maw. These ferocious orifices have unique methods of digesting their victims; from necrotic bile, to great clamping mandibles, to endless rows of tiny reciprocating dendrites. Once his prey is devoured and every ounce of nutrient extracted, its memories are encapsulated into tiny larvae that slowly burrow deep inside the Sorcerer-King's rotting cortex.

DEATH PRIEST OF MIRE

"After disembowelling Sergeant Makrx, those things fell on him like ravenous hounds, their filthy hands tearing bloody chunks of meat from his ruined gut. I will not call them men; men don't eat like that."

—General Mortswain's personal account following the pacification of the Degradant Uprising

Of the various worlds within the Screaming Vortex that exhibit signs of Nurgle's pestilent touch, few are as prominent as the barren and blighted planet of Mire. Here the squalid denizens forage aimlessly amidst endless foetid pools of festering muck and decaying vegetation, their diseased bodies enduring solely due to Nurgle's unnatural ministrations. Perhaps the most dangerous of these are the so-called Death Priests who prey upon their fellow Mirens in order to perpetuate their disgusting adulation of the Plague God's bountiful corruptions. These feculent warriors are highly prized within the debased warbands of the Screaming Vortex, and many opportunistic slavers exploit their infamous enthusiasm for slaughter by luring these voracious killers off-world with promises of fresh carcasses to consume.

PLAYING A DEATH PRIEST OF MIRE

Death Priests of Mire are hardy warriors who feed on the bodies of their victims in order to nourish the parasites, diseases, and other foul poxes that writhe in their bloated guts. They believe these afflictions to be a blessing from the Plague Father. On Mire, they see it as their unholy duty to hunt down the so-called "Pyrions"—clean ones—and devour them. After slaying any foe, though, they usually gorge themselves on every scrap of putrescent sustenance to feed the ravenous diseases that wrack their ghoulish forms.

Death Priests are notorious for the frenetic eagerness with which they devour their victims, often violently ripping the flesh with their bare hands in order to assuage their blasphemous appetites. Afterward, they abandon their kill, content in the knowledge that each ravaged carcass is yet another monument to Nurgle's unending bounty. Such is the path of a Death-Priest, and each is content to endure amidst endless decay and ruin while suckling at the font of corruption as their loathsome afflictions flourish and multiply. Death Priests are pallid, sickly creatures whose emaciated frames, leprous, bubo-pocked skin, and horrifically distended paunches

bear witness to the extent of their physical corruption. Like many of Nurgle's servants, they are coated in filth, both from their own diseases and their mud-covered home world, and their touch often carries with it the risk of lethal infection. Yet despite their deathly appearance, they are incredibly savage killers, eagerly stalking their prey with a feverish intensity and remarkable vigour born both of their devotion to Nurgle and the perpetual, ravenous hunger that festers within them.

Most Death Priests favour blades and other melee weapons, which they then coat in their own rancid filth or smear with the rotting offal of their most recent kills; however, those who abandon the desolation of Mire often become surprisingly adept with a number of other grisly weapons. Yet despite this proficiency for killing, most

Death Priests view any weapon that destroys the victim's body with contempt, believing such acts to be anathema to their unholy work. To these vile warriors, manifestations of decay and putrefaction are evidence of Nurgle's approval, and many delight in wallowing amidst the foetid, decomposing corpses of the fallen.



DEATH PRIEST OF MIRE

A Death Priest of Mire must be Human.

Characteristic Bonus: +5 Strength, +5 Weapon Skill *or* Perception, +5 Toughness, +15 Corruption Points, and +7 Infamy.

Starting Skills: Athletics +10, Awareness +10, Common Lore (Mire), Dodge, Parry, Dodge +10 *or* Parry +10, Forbidden Lore (Psykers) *or* (Daemonology), Interrogation *or* Command *or* Intimidate +10, Intimidate, Linguistics (Miren), Navigate (Surface), Navigate Surface +10 *or* Scholastic Lore (Occult), Survival, Stealth *or* Survival +10.

Starting Talents: Ambidextrous *or* Berserk Charge, Betrayer, Cold Hearted, Combat Sense, Die Hard, Disarm *or* Takedown, Disturbing Voice *or* Sound Constitution, Frenzy, Furious Assault *or* Two Weapon Wielder, Hardy, Jaded, Light Sleeper, Resistance (Fear, Poisons), Street Fighting *or* Unarmed Warrior, Sure Strike, True Grit, Unshakeable Will, Weapon Training (Primary, SP, Las) and (Bolt) *or* (Chain).

Starting Traits: Toxic (Corruption Bonus).

Starting Gear: Good Craftsmanship Autogun *or* Shotgun *or* Scavenged Bolter, Good Craftsmanship Stub Revolver *or* Poor Craftsmanship Bolt Pistol, Good Craftsmanship Sword *or* Common Craftsmanship Chainsword, 2 Magazines for Selected Weapons, Flak Jacket, Melee Attachment for one Selected Weapon.

Wounds: 12+1d5.

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

Contaminated Blades: Death Priests often smear their weapons with the rancid remnants of their recent kills and other putrid sources of decay in order to better spread the vile maladies of their diseased patron. As a Full Action, a Death Priest of Mire may make a **Routine (+10) Survival Test** to coat his own melee weapons and solid projectiles ammunition in filth from a suitable source. These weapons gain the Toxic (2), Corrosive, *or* Irradiated (2) Quality for a number of Rounds equal to the Death Priest's Degrees of Success on the Survival Test.

Grotesque Appetite: Once per encounter, as a Full Action, a Death Priest of Mire may consume and desecrate a fresh corpse within reach. When he does so, he gains the Unnatural Toughness (1d5) Trait (*or* increases the value of this Trait by 1d5 if he already possesses it) until the end of the encounter.

Putrescence Within, Putrescence Without: Death Priests of Mire exude all manner of corruption and filth from the many contagions and parasites that fester within their distended guts. Whenever an enemy strikes the Death Priest with a melee attack, the Death Priest may spend an Infamy Point to destroy the weapon that struck him after the attack is resolved. Whether or not the weapon can later be restored through cleansing, devotion, and sacrifice is left to the GM.

Death Priests of Mire begin play Aligned to Nurgle.

DEATH PRIESTS OF MIRE IN THE VORTEX

Death Priests of Mire are well suited to life within the Screaming Vortex, often earning a fearsome reputation as vicious and accomplished killers despite their savage origins. For those who survive this transition, the Vortex is an endless and enticing smorgasbord of corrupt sustenance, its every morsel oozing with untapped potential for gangrenous new life.

The following are vile examples of Death Priests whose abhorrent practices rank them among the most revolting of the Vortex's denizens.

The Brood Kine: Long ago, a pack of Death Priests discovered a swarm of Nurglings frolicking inside a disease-infested mud pit while wandering the squalid wastes of Mire. Upon beholding these creatures, they immediately turned on each other, hacking their companions apart in order to entice the Daemons with offerings of rancid meat. The survivors are now hosts for this repugnant clutch of spiteful imps, housing them within their filth-lined bowels in order to ensure their continued sustenance.

Calorracts: Few of the Death Priests that brave the sunken, mouldering swamps of Mire's crumbling cave system ever return, most falling victim to ancient toxins and other foul hazards within that accursed darkness. Those who do emerge are greatly feared among the cannibal lords of Mire, for each is bursting with maladies so potent that only the most blessed of the Plague Lord's servants can survive in their presence. They are nearly impossible to kill, often bearing scores of seemingly debilitating wounds which neither hinder nor heal as they relentlessly stalk their prey with sunken, yellow eyes.

The Slaving Synpestulent: The Corpse Reapers are a terrifying warband within the Screaming Vortex known for their brutal raids and the mounds of dead and mutilated left in their wake. The original members were harvested from Mire by a particularly ruthless pirate warlord who now allows his captive Death Priests free reign over any survivors of their raids in exchange for the skulls of the slain. Meanwhile, the unfortunate captives are compelled to join in a revolting feast that lasts for seven days and nights wherein they are force-fed the putrid remains of their dead and dying comrades. Those who survive this horrific ordeal often elect to join their captors in order to satisfy the peculiar, gnawing hunger that now festers inside them.

PLAGUEMEISTER

"Every biological system is prone to failure and eventual cessation; such is the fate of all flesh. I, however, desire a much more intriguing conclusion from such unspoilt specimens."

—Sealed Data, from *Observations of Kilpengur the Blighted*

The infected hordes that spread Nurgle's virulent worship are legion; however, few who venerate the Plague God are as fascinated with the intricacies of their lord's ghastly benedictions as a Plaguemeister. These deranged individuals arise from a variety of backgrounds and origins, but many inevitably flock to the tortured region known as the Screaming Vortex. Here, Nurgle's faithful regard them with reverent admiration, while others view them as dangerous and reckless sycophants whose foolish obsession will be the death of themselves and countless others.

PLAYING A PLAGUEMEISTER

Plaguemeisters are gruesome and macabre physicians whose unnatural fascination with the many manifestations of Nurgle defines and dominates every facet of their blasphemous lifestyle. They are among his most devoted servants, eagerly examining all manner of virulent maladies in order to identify every manifestation of Nurgle's blessings. That such creations are continuously evolving into more virulent forms is a source of repellent delight to these demented apothecaries, who enthusiastically record each new symptom and strain.

Plaguemeisters believe that Nurgle's greatest achievement is not death, but rather the putrescent afflictions that preserve his servants in a state of deathless entropy. Most hold such gruesome processes and necrotic microbes in high regard, fervently placating themselves before the Plague Lord so that he may grant them new specimens to study and dissect. Of particular interest are individuals that have surrendered themselves to Nurgle's maledictions, and many Plaguemeisters take great joy collecting rancid specimens from these decaying servants.

Plaguemeisters strive to emulate their pestilent patron in their endeavours, gleefully blending their collections of poxes and contagions in order to create deadly, new illnesses through which to spread Nurgle's insidious influence. Some are devious and subtle in their approach, often relying on misdirection and other nefarious tactics to gradually inoculate entire populations with deadly maladies designed to bring about decades of suffering and despair. A daring few are much more reckless in their devotions, unleashing their polluted creations indiscriminately in order to better study the unadulterated effects of their chosen malady. However, most Plaguemeisters have little desire to succumb to their own diseases, and most take preventative steps against this fatal irony. As a result, the severity of each Plaguemeister's personal corruption is often discrete enough to allow him to pass unnoticed among potential victims.

TABLE 2-1: BOONS OF THE PLAGUE GOD

1d10 Roll	Effect
1–4	The character develops noxious hives. While grotesque, these are harmless, except to aesthetics and comfort.
5	The character becomes infected with the Death's Grasp Disease (see page 46).
6	The character becomes infected with the Enfeeble Disease (see page 46). Roll 1d10 again. On a result of 7, the character becomes Possessed by a Plaguebearer of Nurgle (see Possessed Heretics on page 56). On any other result, permanently increase the character's Toughness Characteristic by 1d5–3 (minimum 0).
7	
8	The character becomes infected with the Nurgle's Breath Disease (see page 47).
9	The character becomes infected with the Festering Shroud Disease (see page 47).
10	The character gains the Toxic (7) Trait for 7 hours.



PLAGUEMEISTER

A Plaguemeister must be Human.

Characteristic Bonus: Plaguemeisters gain +10 Intelligence, +5 Toughness, +15 Corruption Points, and +9 Infamy.

Starting Skills: Awareness, Charm, Deceive, Charm +10 *or* Deceive +10, Common Lore (Any Two), Commerce, Dodge *or* Parry, Forbidden Lore (Heresy), Forbidden Lore (Psykers) *or* (The Warp), Forbidden Lore (Any One), Inquiry +10, Interrogation +10, Intimidate +10, Medicae +10, Scholastic Lore (Chymistry) +10, Scholastic Lore (Any One) +10, Security *or* Tech-Use, Stealth.

Starting Talents: Disturbing Voice *or* Radiant Presence *or* Unremarkable, Foresight, Furious Assault, Hardy, Jaded, Lightning Reflexes *or* Light Sleeper, Mimic *or* Polyglot *or* Total Recall, Paranoia, Quick Draw *or* Sound Constitution, Resistance (Poisons, Fear), Street Fighting *or* Sure Strike, Total Recall, Unshakeable Will, Weapon Training (Primary, Chain, Power), Weapon Training (Las) *or* (SP).

Starting Gear: Good Craftsmanship Laspistol *or* Autopistol, Good Craftsmanship Sword *or* Common Craftsmanship Chain Dagger *or* Power Blade, 2 Magazines for Chosen Weapon, Light Carapace Armour *or* Mesh Combat Cloak, Injector, Medi-Kit, 5 doses of any one Disease (see pages 46–47), Filtration Plugs, Dataslate.

Wounds: 10+1d5.

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

The Wretched Tally: Plaguemeisters take immense joy in studying and cataloguing the Plague God's numerous pestilences and poxes. A Plaguemeister is immune to the Fear Trait of entities Aligned to Nurgle, and may make a **Routine (+10) Awareness Test** as a Free Action to accurately identify (and catalogue) a creature, weapon, ailment, or sorcery that bears Nurgle's mark. He gains a +30 bonus to Common Lore, Forbidden Lore, and Scholastic Lore Tests, as well as to the Diagnose and Chem-Use Special Uses of the Medicae Skill, that he makes involving creatures, objects, plagues, and poisons that he has previously identified and catalogued.

Malevolent Generosity: Plaguemeisters bestow vile concoctions of pestilence on those afflicted with the curse of mortality. When a Plaguemeister removes Damage from a target with the Medicae Skill, he may spend an Infamy Point to remove additional Damage equal to his Intelligence Bonus and end any Critical Effects the target is suffering. However, any character he heals this way must make a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test**; if he fails, roll 1d10 on **Table 2–1: Boons of the Plague God** and apply the results to the patient.

Plaguemeisters begin play Aligned to Nurgle.

PLAGUEMEISTERS IN THE VORTEX

Plaguemeisters within the Screaming Vortex are seldom idle, often spending their time incessantly probing the spectacularly gruesome manifestations of pestilence which seem so abundant within this chaotic sector. Such studies are a blight upon nearby Imperial worlds, whose unsuspecting populaces often suffer and die in order to satisfy the macabre fascination of these ghoulish fiends.

The following are examples of Plaguemeisters whose morbid interest in disease has made them objects of revulsion and fear within the Imperium.

Plague Mother Septhrix: Sepharia Tourande was once a figure of great renown within the various medical circles that cater to the lavish decadence of the Imperial Aristocracy. Yet as her influence grew, so too did the numbers of emaciated sycophants who spread her ghastly treatments and heretical rejuvenant techniques. The fallout from her inevitable persecution was devastating, and now she roams the outer reaches of the Screaming Vortex, her corpulent bulk sprawling on a palanquin of soiled finery set upon the shoulders of her seven favourite ghouls.

Rheumalicae Surpetiss: Rheumalicae is a particularly wicked chymist whose fascination with the bonds of addiction has allowed him to reap a horrendous tally of souls in Nurgle's name. His diseases are incredibly subtle in nature, often taking decades to slowly dissolve their victims from within, while the various stimulants and narcotics which flow through the victims' bloodstream inure them to the pain of their chronic condition. Eventually, as the necrotic toxins take their toll, Rheumalicae begins their indoctrination in the ways of his vile patron with promises of eternal freedom from the torments of their rotting frames.

The Forlorn Hope: Medicae Cruisers are common within the Departmento Munitorum, often seeing extensive service during the many brutal offensives perpetrated in the Emperor's name. The *Forlorn Hope* was one such vessel; however, its massive surgery theatres and pristine apothecariums were swiftly overwhelmed with contagion following a cataclysmic brush with Chaos renegades. The valiant crew fought desperately against this nightmarish pathogen that crammed the ship's holds with the dead and dying, but they could not stem the implacable tide of corruption, and so Nurgle's champions won a terrible victory for their dread patron.



DECAYING ARMOURY

"Moments from now you will be little more than a puddle of slime. But worry not, for your death shall bring about the creation of many new and horrifying diseases."

—S'Thall, Blight Prince of Nurgle

Nurgle weapons are terrifying to behold. Unlike the shimmering weapons of Tzeentch, the excessive beauty of Slaaneshi weapons or the simple brutality of Khornate arms, Nurgle's blessed weapons are blighted and malformed implements of sheer horror. There is no mistaking their purpose: the spread of death and contagions in the name of the Plague Father. Their wielders are the reapers of a grim harvest, and put their patron god's favoured instruments to use with an inexorable vigour.

This section covers a number of technologies and objects corrupted and infused with the putrid power craved by Nurgle's worshipers within the Vortex. Most of the weapons and wargear found within these pages relate in some way to the Chaos God Nurgle—the Lord of Decay—as well as the worlds within the Vortex where Nurgle holds the most sway.

NEW WEAPON SPECIAL QUALITIES

CORROSIVE

When a target is struck by an attack from a weapon with the Corrosive Quality, the Armour Points of any armour worn by the target in that Hit Location are reduced by 1d10 points. If the Armour Points of the armour fall below 0 or the target has no armour in that Hit Location, the target suffers additional Damage equal to the amount by which the Corrosive Quality's effect exceeded his armour, ignoring Toughness bonus. The effects of a Corrosive weapon can reduce a target's armour multiple times, and the effect is cumulative. Damaged armour can be repaired with a successful **Challenging (+0) Tech-Use Test**.

DECAY (X)

Any living creature that suffers Critical Damage (including Damage from Zealous Hatred) from this weapon must make a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** with penalty equal to 10 times X or perish as it collapses into an amorphous puddle of sludge.

IRRADIATED (X)

When a character is struck by an attack from this weapon (whether or not he suffers Damage) he must immediately make a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** with penalty equal to 10 times X or suffer 2d10 Toughness Damage.

MELEE WEAPONS

Weapons blessed by Nurgle often appear as though ready to crumble or break. Their decrepit forms belie their true lethality, however. Even the slightest cut can bring death to thousands. Infused with plagues created within the depths of Nurgle's Garden, the Fly Lord's weapons dispense infections and maladies to all those who refuse the Plague Father's gifts. Some of these weapons are Daemon Weapons, which are described on page 194 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook.

FATHER OF BLADES (DAEMON WEAPON)

Rumoured to be the original Plague Swords created not long after Nurgle came into being, the ancient Fathers of Blades have spent millennia spreading corruption. Their cracked and rusted lengths deaden the senses of those nearby, and any who mistime their swings find their attacks deflected off its corroded edge.

The Father of Blades is a one-handed Daemon Weapon with Willpower 77 and a Binding Strength of 4. It has the Bile-Quenched, Pestilent Stench, and Plague Carrier attributes. Whenever the wielder successfully Parries a Melee Attack made against him and scores 5 or more Degrees of Success, the attacker immediately suffers a single hit as if he had struck himself with his own weapon. Only those dedicated to Nurgle can wield a Father of Blades.

MANREAPER (DAEMON WEAPON)

Iconic weapons of Nurgle's greatest champions, Manreapers are the Daemon-infused relics of the Death Guard Legion. Many Plague Cults go to great lengths to acquire or even forge their own, and the Daemons that inhabit these cruel weapons draw power from the filth surrounding the Plague God's throne.

A Manreaper is a two-handed Daemon Weapon with Willpower 57 and a Binding Strength of 3. It has the Accursed and Herald of Decay attributes. Whenever the wielder makes a Charge or All-Out Attack Action with a Manreaper, he may inflict a single hit identical to the first on one additional target in range for every two Degrees of Success he scores on the Test after the first. A Best Craftsmanship Manreaper also has the Force Quality. Only those dedicated to Nurgle can wield a Manreaper.



PANDEMIC STAFF (DAEMON WEAPON)

A mucus-covered length of rotting wood and rusting metal, the Pandemic Staff constantly seeps bile and other horrific substances. Acting as a vessel for some of Nurgle's most virulent plagues, the Pandemic Staff unleashes a torrent of filth toward any who would deny the Fly Lord's perfection.

A Pandemic Staff is a two-handed Daemon Weapon with Willpower 34 and a Binding Strength of 2. It has the Stream of Corruption attribute. Only those dedicated to Nurgle can wield a Pandemic Staff.

PLAGUE KNIFE

Seen in the hands of dreaded Plague Marines, the Plague Knife is a long, thin blade caked with grime and dripping with disease. Small cuts can transform into raging infections within seconds, and the blade can fell even the largest of creatures with a single swipe.

A Plague Knife is a one-handed Legion Weapon.

PESTILENT FLAIL

Part censer, part weapon, the Pestilent Flail spreads contagion as it sails through the air, a thick green cloud following each strike. Anyone trained in the weapon's use are true monsters in close quarters, able to quickly kill whilst masking their movements with the haze that emanates from the weapon.

Whenever a Heretic makes a Melee Attack with a Pestilent Flail, he gains a +10 bonus to Dodge Tests until the end of his next Turn. Any Heretic not dedicated to Nurgle suffers 1 Damage (ignoring armour and Toughness Bonus) whenever he makes an attack with a Pestilent Flail.

TABLE 2-2: EXOTIC MELEE WEAPONS

Name	Class	Range	Damage	Pen	Special	Wt.	Availability
Father of Blades†	Melee	—	2d10+3 R	4	Toxic (7), Unbalanced	7kg	Near Unique
Manreaper†	Melee	—	2d10+7 R	7	Felling (5), Power Field, Toxic (2), Unbalanced	8kg	Near Unique
Pandemic Staff (Melee)	Melee	—	1d10+3 I	0	Balanced, Decay (4), Toxic (3)	4kg	Near Unique
Pandemic Staff (Ranged)	Basic	30m	2d10+3 I	0	Corrosive, Recharge, Spray, Toxic (3)	4kg	Near Unique
Plague Knife†	Melee	—	1d10 R	2	Felling (4), Toxic (3)	2kg	Extremely Rare
Pestilent Flail†	Melee	5m	2d10+6 E	4	Concussive (1), Flexible, Unwieldy	6kg	Extremely Rare

† This weapon has additional rules. See full rules for more details.

TABLE 2-3: GRENADES

Name	Class	Range	RoF	Damage	Pen	Special	Wt.	Availability
Foulswarm Grenade†	Thrown	SBx3	S/-/-	2d10 X	6	Blast (3), Corrosive, Smoke (6), Toxic (3)	1.5kg	Extremely Rare
Rad Grenade	Thrown	SBx3	S/-/-	1d10 E	0	Blast (2), Irradiated (2)	1kg	Very Rare
Rad Missile	—	—	—	1d10+4 E	2	Blast (4), Irradiated (4)	2kg	Extremely Rare

† This weapon has additional rules. See full rules for more details.

GRENADES

Those that have chosen the path of decay know that there are many different ways to spread the Plague Father's gifts. The Blight Grenade is perhaps the most well known, but there are many devices capable of saturating an area with toxins as well as ancient technologies that spread death slowly and painfully.

FOULSWARM GRENADE

As lethal to create as they are to use, Foulswarm Grenades contain a foul concoction whose true nature is known only to the most pox-blessed Plaguemeisters of the Screaming Vortex. Sealed with wicked alchemy and fell curses of rot, these weapons produce an acrid, seething haze upon detonation that drifts outward like a ravenous cloud of flies, inexorably enveloping and putrefying everything it touches.

Whenever a creature begins its Turn in the cloud of smoke created by the Smoke Quality of a Foulswarm Grenade, it suffers a single automatic hit that inflicts 2d10 Impact Damage with the Corrosive and Toxic (3) Qualities.

RAD GRENADE

Difficult to find and manufacture, Rad Grenades contain tiny radioactive particles that blink out of existence within a second of exposure to air. Despite the short duration effects, the cellular ruination they cause is often enough to leave the toughest of foes gasping as radiation saps their vitality.

RAD MISSILE

Similar to Rad Grenades, Rad Missiles spread their lethal cargo over a wider area.

SPECIAL AMMUNITION

These ammunition types are obtained in full clips and not individually unless otherwise noted.

BLOODROT ROUNDS

Made in small quantities on a handful of Screaming Vortex worlds, the Bloodrot Round contains a few drops of the same noxious brew that fills Foulswarm Grenades. Hand-loaded into Heavy Bolters, these rounds decimate clumps of enemy infantry and render areas too dangerous to pass. Bloodrot Rounds change the Heavy Bolter's profile to the following: (Heavy; 80m; S/-/-; 3d10 X ; Pen 6; Blast [5], Corrosive, Smoke [1], Toxic [3]).

Whenever a creature begins its Turn in the cloud of smoke created by the Smoke Quality of a Bloodrot Round, it suffers a single automatic hit that inflicts 2d10 Impact Damage with the Corrosive and Toxic (3) Qualities.

SCOURGE SHELLS

Scourge Shells have many names across the Screaming Vortex—Tox Slugs, V-Rounds, and so on—but all variants retain similar methods of construction and use. Scourge Shells are hollow, allowing their users to fill them with various toxic concoctions.

Shotguns using Scourge Shells lose the Scatter Quality, but increase their Penetration by 2 and gain the Razor Sharp Quality. Additionally, a Heretic may load a clip of Scourge Shells with any Disease or toxin he has on hand as a Full Action by making a **Routine (+20) Medicae Test** (using the Chem-Use Special Use of the Skill). If he succeeds, any character who suffers Damage from the Scourge Shell also suffers any effects of the Disease or poison planted in it.

TABLE 2-4: SPECIAL AMMUNITION

Name	Can Upgrade	Availability
Bloodrot Rounds	Heavy Bolter, Legion Heavy Bolter	Extremely Rare
Scourge Shells	Assault Shotguns, Legion Shotguns, Shotguns	Rare



TABLE 2-5: CYBERNETIC HORRORS

Name	Availability	Weapon Profile
Dendrite Blade†	Rare	Melee; 1d10+4 R; Pen 3; Flexible, Razor Sharp
Mechatendrill†	Very Rare	Melee; 1d10+5 I; Pen 0; Flexible
Plague Claw	Extremely Rare	Melee; 1d10+2 I; Pen 2; Decay (3), Tearing

†A Heretic can only have a number of Dendrite Blades and/or Mechatendrills up to his Toughness Bonus.



CYBERNETIC HORRORS

Cybernetic implants are common throughout the galaxy, but for those who serve the Ruinous Powers, bionic devices are more than mere tools. Every snakelike tendril or snapping claw a Warpsmith has fused into his metallic frame can kill, and few such devices remain unbloodied for long. The items below require the Mechanicus Implants Traits unless otherwise noted.

DENDRITE BLADE

A lethal weapon that seems to act on its own volition, Dendrite Blades consist of many linked metallic coils each ending in a serrated blade or wickedly sharp hook. They whip around the bearer, almost as if seeking out prey.

Each Dendrite Blade is a Mechadendrite, and a Heretic must have the Mechadendrite Use (Weapon) Talent to gain its benefits. Whenever an enemy makes a Melee Attack against a Heretic equipped with one or more Dendrite Blades, he suffers a –10 penalty on his Weapon Skill Test for each Dendrite Blade the Heretic has equipped (to a maximum of –30). If the attacker fails his Weapon Skill Test by three or more Degrees of Failure, the attacker immediately suffers 1 automatic hit with the listed profile, plus 1 additional hit per Degree of Failure beyond the third (to a maximum equal to the number of Dendrite Blades the character has equipped).

Additionally, a Heretic with one or more Dendrite Blades always counts as being armed with a weapon with the listed Weapon Profile. He must have the Mechadendrite Use (Weapon) Talent to wield a Dendrite Blade without penalty.

MECHATENDRIL

Equal parts tool and weapon, Mechatendrills snake restlessly around Heretekks and Warpsmiths as they seek out new tasks to complete. Used for complex repairs as well as combat, the versatility of the Mechatendrills make them invaluable if temperamental assets to those that reject the Omnissiah.

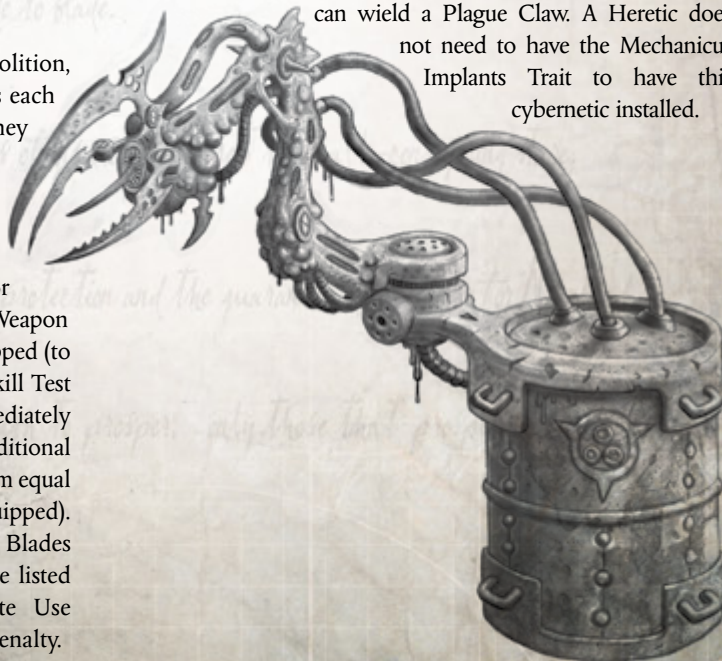
Each Mechatendrill is a Mechadendrite that grants the Heretic an additional +5 bonus on Crafting Skill Tests (see page 92 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). A Heretic must have the Mechadendrite Use (Utility) Talent to gain this benefit.

Additionally, a Heretic with one or more Mechatendrills always counts as being armed with a weapon with the listed Weapon Profile. He must have the Mechadendrite Use (Weapon) Talent to wield a Mechatendrill without penalty.

PLAGUE CLAW

A twisted fusion of rotting flesh and corroded machinery, a Plague Claw launches a pulsating tube with a barbed claw at the end that punches through armour and flesh and spews all manner of toxins directly into the target's body.

A Plague Claw grants a +10 bonus on Medicae Tests for the Diagnose and Chem-Use Special Uses of the Skill, and can be used to store and hold samples of various plagues, toxins, and other foul concoctions pleasing to the Lord of Disease. A Heretic with a Plague Claw always counts as being armed with a weapon with the listed Weapon Profile. This weapon can be loaded with any Disease or toxin as a Full Action; until the end of the encounter, any character who suffers Damage from it suffers the effects of the loaded malady. Only a character dedicated to Nurgle can wield a Plague Claw. A Heretic does not need to have the Mechanicus Implants Trait to have this cybernetic installed.



WARGEAR AND EQUIPMENT

Moreso than even the weapons of Nurgle, the tools and artefacts in service to the Plague God's minions show signs of corruption that can wilt the spirit of the most pious. Their original forms often lost behind centuries of bubbling decay, these devices have lost none of their potency, and in fact seem to draw strength from the stench of death.

TABLE 2-6: WARGEAR AND EQUIPMENT

Name	Weight	Availability
Icon of Seeping Decay	7kg	Very Rare
Undead Heart	1.5kg	Unique

ICON OF SEEPING DECAY

Once-proud banners, badges, or other mighty totems of faith, the Icons of Seeping Decay have long since lost any regal visage and instead drip with the corruption of Nurgle, slowing those that would stand against him and strengthening those that walk the path of filth. An Icon of Seeping Decay is a large Icon and must either be carried in one hand or affixed to a sturdy backpack.

All characters aligned to Nurgle within a number of metres equal to the Heretic's Willpower Bonus count their Agility Bonus as 1 higher and may make a **Difficult (-10) Toughness Test** at the start of each of their Turns to remove 1 level of Fatigue. All other characters within that area count their Agility Bonus as 1 lower (to a minimum of 1) and must pass a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** at the start of each of their Turns or gain 1 level of Fatigue. The Icon only functions when carried by a character dedicated to Nurgle.

UNDEAD HEART

Rotten to the core, those implanted with an Undead Heart become living masses of corruption. As they suffer injury, new afflictions sprout to form layers of scar-flesh, protecting the wearer from harm and healing almost any injury.

A Heretic implanted with such terrible sorcery gains the Regeneration (1d5) and The Stuff of Nightmares Traits. Implanting such a device requires a **Hard (-30) Medicae Test** and takes hours; if the character attempting the operation fails, reduce the would-be recipient's Toughness Characteristic by 1d5 as a result of the failed surgery. These arcane contraptions cannot be removed without destroying their hosts irrevocably.

DISEASES

There is no end to Nurgle's creativity when it comes to new ailments, and many of Nurgle's followers create their own versions of the Great Corruptor's putrid handiwork and grant them to anyone foolish enough to refuse Nurgle's benevolence. Heretics may load the Diseases listed below into a number of items featured in this section. Heretics acquire Diseases in batches of 5 doses.

A character is exposed to a Disease whenever he suffers Damage from a weapon imbued with that Disease or a specific effect of the disease triggers an exposure. Alternatively, characters can be exposed by inhaling, ingesting, or making direct contact with infected substances (at the GM's discretion). Typically, a character must make a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** when exposed to a Disease to avoid catching it.

DEATH'S GRASP

Victim's unfortunate to contract Death's Grasp live a pathetic life at the very edge of death. Sapped of all energy, any task they perform might be their last.

Effects: A character infected with this Disease cannot remove Levels of Fatigue. Whenever he gains a level of Fatigue, each other character within 1d10 metres is also exposed to the Disease (and must make the Test to resist it). If a character slips into Unconsciousness due to excessive levels of Fatigue while infected with this Disease, he perishes. Characters dedicated to Nurgle can carry this Disease, but can still remove levels of Fatigue as normal while infected.

Treatment: Curing Death's Grasp requires constant rest for at least a week, at the end of which the character may make a **Routine (+20) Toughness Test**; if he succeeds, he recovers, but if he fails, he remains infected and gains 1 level of Fatigue.

ENFEEBLE

Enfeeble is a brutal malady that slowly corrodes the victim's bones into dust. Many of Nurgle's most dedicated devotees inject themselves with the virulent plague, seeing death as the ultimate expression of devotion.

Effects: A character infected by Enfeeble suffers 1d5 Agility Damage each time he takes a Full Action or two Half Actions during one of his Turns during Structured Time, or whenever he takes strenuous action during Narrative Time. Characters dedicated to Nurgle suffer the effects of this Disease as normal, though they rarely view it as "suffering," instead revelling in the wracking affliction.

Treatment: To be cured of Enfeeble, a character must remove all of the Agility Damage (see page 256 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) the disease has caused through rest or other means.

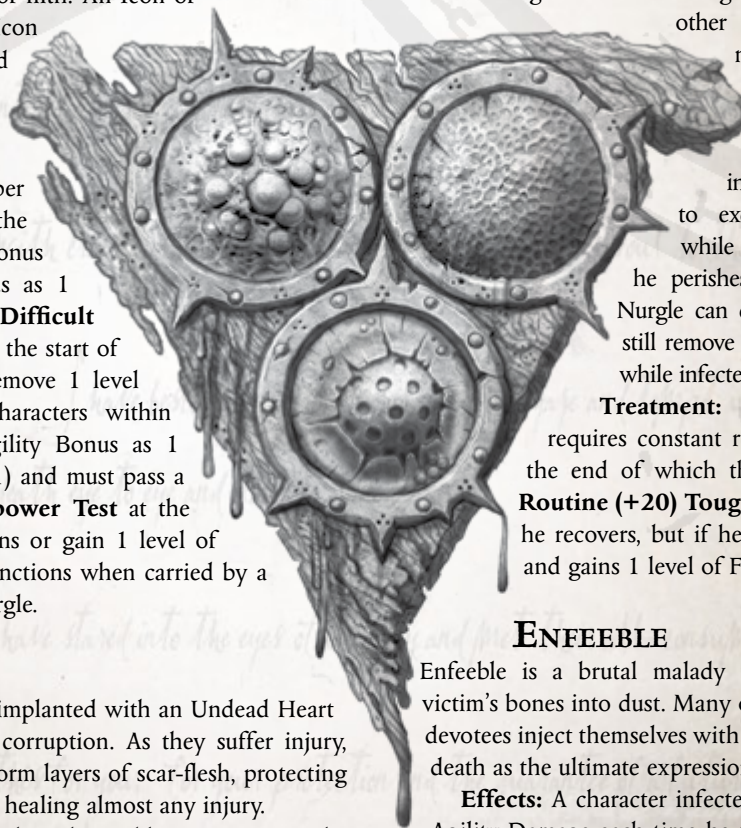


TABLE 2-7: DISEASES

Name	Availability
Death's Grasp	Very Rare
Enfeeble	Rare
Festering Shroud	Rare
Nurgle's Breath	Extremely Rare

FESTERING SHROUD

Festering Shroud is an insidious blight first encountered by voidship crews entering the Lower Vortex. Exceptionally contagious, those that contract the disease find their bodies converted into chimneys of pestilence, spreading a vile miasma wherever they go.

Effects: A character infected by Festering Shroud constantly emits an unnatural green fog that spreads around him in a 7-metre diameter cloud. At the end of each 24-hour period for which he has the disease, a character must make a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test**; if he fails, his flesh putrefies, collapsing in on itself in a vile torrent. Roll 1d5 on a randomly determined **Impact Critical Effect Table** (see pages 252–253 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook), adding +1 to the roll for every Degree of Failure he scored on the Test beyond the first and apply the result. Whenever another character enters the cloud, he must make a **Routine (+20) Toughness Test** or contract the Disease. Characters dedicated to Nurgle can carry this Disease but do not suffer the portions of any Critical Effect the Disease causes them that would cause them to suffer Blood Loss or die.

Treatment: Curing Festering Shroud requires constant rest for at least a week and a successful **Challenging (+0) Medicae Check** on the part of the character or a healer.

NURGLE'S BREATH

Sometimes seen as a boon, Nurgle's Breath is popular among many Plague Cults for its ability to propagate quickly. However, those who understand the infection know that death lurks around the corner each time the afflicted use this most contagious "gift."

Effects: A character infected by Nurgle's Breath gains a new attack with the following profile: (Pistol; 10m; S/-/-; Dam 2d10 E; Pen 2; Corrosive, Spray, Toxic [2]). This attack cannot Jam, but if the character ever rolls two results of 7 on the Damage dice, he immediately explodes in a disgusting shower of pus and slimy gore. Obviously, he dies, and each character within 3d10 metres suffers an immediate hit from the weapon. Any character who fails a Toughness Test to resist the Toxic Quality from Nurgle's Breath contracts the Disease. Characters dedicated to Nurgle suffer the effects of this Disease as normal, though they rarely view it as "suffering."

Treatment: Curing Nurgle's Rot requires constant rest for at least two weeks and a successful **Hard (-20) Medicae Check** on the part of the character or a healer.



EXPANDED RITES AND RITUALS

"The ritual has succeeded! Wait... no, no! The Daemon is manifest! Flee!"

—Deltoth the Wise, former Cult Master

The Rites and Rituals presented in the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook give a general overview of how both the GM and players can construct rituals to suit their own needs, the consequences of failure, and a number of example rituals used to summon the more iconic Chaos Daemons. This section contains Rituals for possessing living beings, updated rules for binding Daemons to Daemon Engines, and the most common Plaguebearer-summoning ritual within the Vortex.

The Rituals listed below follow the same format as standard Rituals (see pages 228–229 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). GMs can insert these Rituals into an ongoing campaign as obstacles for the Heretics, or at the start of an adventure as part of their Compact. Players might wish to use one of these Rites and Rituals to enhance their own standing, punish their enemies, or simply to cause mayhem and destruction. In all cases it is up to the GM to determine the Ritual's difficulty and whether the Ritual is possible at all.

UNLEASH THE FOETID FOOTMAN

Plague Cults often summon Plaguebearers to help them in the spreading of disease and corruption. Obsessed with counting and cataloguing every contagion ever created, Plaguebearers welcome any chance to push through to the mortal realm.

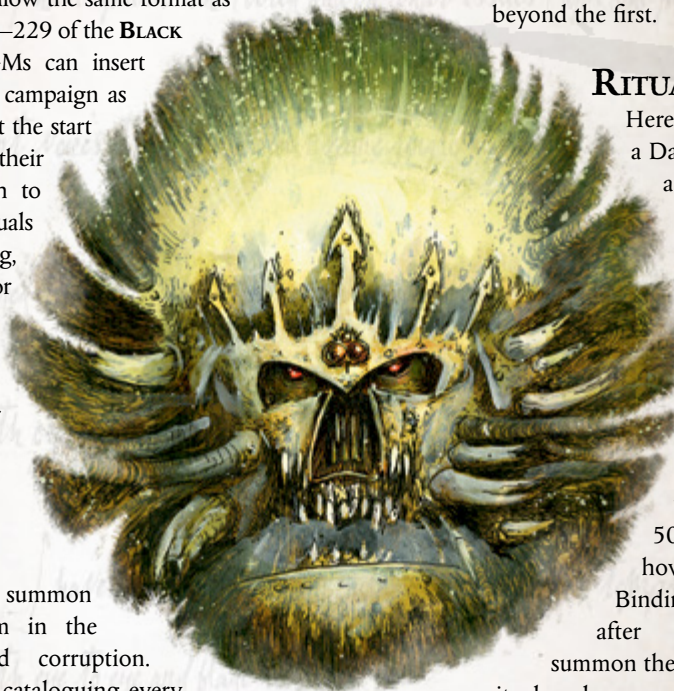
Requirements: The ritual must take place in an area touched by disease and the stench of death, and requires a roughly carved circle marked with icons devoted to Nurgle while cauldrons of putrid bubbling liquids fill the entire area with a horrid stench. Rotting corpses—they needn't be human—should form a pile at the centre. A single adult human, their body untouched by disease or illness, should sit atop the pile of corpses, ready to absorb all the filth become the window through which the Plaguebearer emerges. The ritual requires a **Hard (–20) Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) Test**, modified per **Table 6–7: Summoning Ritual Modifiers** (see page 229 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). If successful, then the Heretic must make a Daemonic Mastery Test to control the Plaguebearer.

Effects: A Plaguebearer (see page 355–356 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) appears in the summoning circle.

Duration: The Plaguebearer remains corporeal for 1d5+5 rounds, plus an additional round for every additional Degree of Success on the Test. Areas where the veil between reality and the Warp is thin might extend this duration. Heretics may summon the Daemon for a specific task (at the GM's discretion), in which case it remains corporeal long enough to accomplish the task.

Cost: Whether successful or not, the Heretic must roll on **Table 6–2: Psychic Phenomena** (see page 210 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) and immediately apply the results. Additionally, each character involved in the ritual must pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or gain 1d5 levels of Fatigue, doubling over and choking on the waves of smog and clouds of flies that accompany the Daemon's arrival.

The Price of Failure: Failure results in a roll for Contempt of the Warp (see page 227 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook), modified by +10 for every Degree of Failure beyond the first.



RITUAL OF BINDING

Heretics that desire the power of a Daemon Engine must undertake a dangerous rite—the Ritual of Binding—in order to merge a Daemonic Entity with their carefully prepared Shell.

Requirements: Before enacting this Ritual, Heretics first need a Shell for their Daemon and need to choose what type of Daemon they want to summon. See pages 49–50 for the full description of how this is done. The Ritual of

Binding takes place immediately after the Heretics successfully summon the Daemon they chose, and this ritual replaces any Daemonic Mastery Test the

Heretics might have taken. The binding requires a single **Hellish (–60) Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) Test**, modified per **Table 6–7: Summoning Ritual Modifiers**.

Effects: The Daemon bonds to the Shell, fusing metal and ætheric flesh. It is now a Daemon Engine.

Duration: Effectively permanent. Until the Daemon breaks free or the Daemon Engine is destroyed, the effects of this ritual remain in place.

Cost: Even the most powerful Heretics find this ritual taxing. Each participant suffers 4d10 Characteristic Damage to each of his Characteristics. Additionally, each participant involved must roll once on **Table 6–2: Psychic Phenomena** (see page 210 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) and immediately suffer the results.

The Price of Failure: The binding fails and the Daemon breaks free of the Heretic's control, attacking them immediately. Roll for Contempt of the Warp (see page 227 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook), modified by +10 for every Degree of Failure beyond the first.

RITUAL OF POSSESSION

Daemons commonly enter the material plane by possessing unfortunate humans against their will. Few Daemons have the strength to do it themselves, but many Chaos servants actively invite Daemons into the material plane by offering host bodies to control.

Requirements: The Ritual of Possession actually encompasses a variety of ritual types used to summon almost any type of Daemon. However, rather than directly calling the Daemon into the material plane, the Heretics instead draw it into a living vessel—not always human, but at least sentient—and the Daemon uses the host body to sustain itself. Much like the Ritual of Binding, the Heretics must choose the type of Daemon they wish to summon and complete the summoning ritual for that Daemon before undertaking the Ritual of Possession. With the Daemon successfully summoned, the Heretics enact the Ritual of Possession in place of the Daemonic Mastery Test by passing a **Hard (-20) Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) Test**, modified per **Table 6-7: Summoning Ritual Modifiers**. If they succeed, the Heretics channel the Daemon into the host, but the Daemon must still beat the host with an **Opposed Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** before the possession takes effect. Unwilling hosts gain a +20 bonus to this Test.

Effects: The Daemon possesses the host. See page 56 for the more permanent effect that possession has on Player Characters. Daemonic possession affects NPCs as described in **Duration** and **Cost**, below.

Duration: NPC hosts rarely survive long. If the Daemon's Willpower Characteristic is less than the host's, the possession lasts as many hours equal to the host's Willpower Bonus. If the Daemon's Willpower Characteristic is higher than the host's, then the possession lasts half as many hours as the host's Willpower Bonus. When the time limit runs out, the Daemon either bursts from the host's body, killing the host before vanishing, or leaves the host and retreats back to the Warp (leaving the host scarred mentally as well as physically).

Cost: The Ritual of Possession takes twice as long as any standard summoning ritual. The host, once exorcised or if the Daemon leaves (and if he survives), permanently reduces his Fellowship by 3d10 and his Wound threshold by 1d5. The host also gains 2d10 Corruption Points, gains the Skill Psyniscience (Per) at Rank 2, the Fearless and Resistance (Psychic Powers) Talents and the Dark Soul Gift of the Gods. Exorcised hosts gain immunity from incurring any further Gifts of the Gods.

The Price of Failure: Failing to successfully possess a host results in a Test for the Contempt of the Warp (see page 227 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook), modified by +10 for every Degree of Failure after the first on either the Forbidden Lore Test or the **Opposed Willpower Test**. Additionally, if the ritual fails, the Host must make a **Challenging (+0) Willpower** or **Toughness Test** or perish outright, his soul dragged into the Empyrean to be devoured by the Daemon.

FORGING DAEMON ENGINES

"Lord Mithros, the ritual is complete. The machines... they breathe!"

—Takonin, Arch-Heretek

Across the vastness of the gulf between stars, wars rage on millions of worlds. Warriors and machines power forth to crushing victories and punishing defeats, each breakthrough fuelled by the deaths of thousands. Yet the forces of Chaos possess an advantage unmatched by mortal armies, unholy fusions of fire and steel that stalk battlefields killing everything in their path. Sorcery merged with technology, Daemon Engines represent the unfettered power of the Warp made manifest.

This section covers the creation of Daemon Engines, including new attributes and Chaotic weapons. This section also contains rules for Daemon Engine Minions (see page 55).

CREATING THE SHELL

Before a group of Heretics try to summon a Daemonic entity, they first need a Shell to house the creature. Daemon Engines come in various shapes and sizes, and even among the more frequently seen Daemon Engines such as Defilers and Forgefiends, no two are exactly alike. All merge with the caged Daemon, allowing aspects of the enraged beast to shine through the otherwise mundane metal exterior.

Prior to summoning a Daemon, the Heretics must create, purchase, or otherwise acquire a Shell, either an existing machine such as a salvaged or stolen vehicle or a specially created prison for the Daemon. The search for a Shell should be a Compact in and of itself (see the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, pages 269–274), unless the Heretics already know of a suitable Shell. Within the Vortex, the worlds Ghibelline, Guelph, Q'Sal, and the War Moons of Talax hold reputations for their Daemon Engines, making them excellent places to start. Creating a Shell is even harder, requiring both extensive knowledge of the Empyrean and its denizens (e.g. Forbidden Lore [Daemonology], Scholastic Lore [Occult] and Forbidden Lore [The Warp]) as well as technical aspects (e.g. Tech-Use and Forbidden Lore [Archeotech]). Additionally, the Heretics require the facilities and materials to construct the Shell.



The Shell influences a number of the Daemon Engine's base properties:

Shell Type: Shells must be either Salvaged (such as a tank, transport, or similar mundane design) or Constructed (something built to house a Daemon, such as an empty Defiler Shell).

Size: Shells must have a Size Trait of 7–10.

Movement: Daemon Engines move and act like any other unit both in and out of combat, even if their Shell was once a vehicle. Different Shells provide different benefits, as follows:

- Tracked Shells gain the Crawler Trait.
- Wheeled Shells gain the Sprint Talent.
- Flying or Hovering Shells gain the Flyer (X) or Hoverer (X) Trait, where X equals the Daemon Engine's Agility Bonus multiplied by 4.
- Shells with 4 or more legs gain the Quadruped Trait.
- Daemon Engines with only two legs gain the Brutal Charge (X) Trait, where X equals the Daemon Engine's Agility Bonus.

Weapons: Daemon Engines often develop new and horrific weapons as part of the binding ritual, but many Shells start with inbuilt weaponry. For a Salvaged Shell, any one Heretic involved in the binding ritual may make a **Challenging (+0) Tech-Use Test**; if he succeeds, one pre-existing weapon on the Shell becomes part of the Daemon Engine's arsenal, plus one additional weapon for every two Degrees of Success he scores beyond the first. If the weapons were built into a Constructed Shell already, then they become part of the Daemon Engine's arsenal automatically. Daemon Engine weapons do not need to reload and have an unlimited Clip Size.

PIERCING THE VEIL

With the Shell ready, the Heretics move onto the most dangerous stage: Summoning and binding the Daemon. This is a difficult and dangerous three-step process:

Step I: Choose Daemon Type: The Heretics must determine what type of Daemon they wish to bind. The type of Daemon determines many of the Daemon Engine's Characteristics, Skills, Traits, and so on. Both the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook and this volume give the rules for summoning the four most iconic Daemons of Chaos (Bloodletters, Daemonettes, Horrors, and Plaguebearers). Nevertheless, there are many more types of Daemons the Heretics might wish to summon. If the GM has access to the **THE TOME OF FATE**, **THE TOME OF BLOOD**, or **THE TOME OF EXCESS**, he can find rules for additional types of Daemons and the Rites and Rituals required to summon them.

Step II: Summon the Daemon: Once the Heretics have chosen the type of Daemon they wish to trap, they must enact the appropriate summoning Ritual. The Heretics must enact the Ritual in the presence of the Shell.

Step III: Bind the Daemon: Assuming the summoning Ritual is successful, the Heretics must immediately enact the Ritual of Binding unless the Heretics have some method or arcane contraption capable of holding the Daemon in place.

A TOUCH OF CHAOS

With their mighty Daemon Engine created and (hopefully) under their control, the Heretics have an immensely powerful and destructive being at their disposal. However, the binding process changes many things as the trapped Daemon twists and warps its new cage into something more deadly than a simple machine.

The Heretics must determine the Characteristics, Wounds, Binding Strength, Skills, Talents, Traits, Alignment, and Daemon Engine Traits for their newly created death machine.

Characteristics & Wounds: The type of Daemon bound to the Shell determines the Daemon Engine's base Weapon Skill, Ballistic Skill, Intelligence, Perception, Willpower, Fellowship and Infamy. The Daemon Engine's Size determines the Strength and Toughness (50 for Size 7, 60 for Size 8, 70 for Size 9 and 80 for Size 10). Size also determines the Daemon Engine's Wounds (40 for Size 7, 52 for Size 8, 64 for Size 9 and 72 for Size 10). Daemon Engines suffer Damage like all other types of creatures but have their own special rules for Critical Damage (see page 96).

Binding Strength: Even similar Daemons Engines tend to differ, with some that deeply suppress the Daemon to some that scarcely contain the raging entity within. All Daemon Engines have a Binding Strength equal to the Degrees of Success scored during the Ritual of Binding.

Skills: All Skills the Daemon had transfer to the new Daemon Engine, although certain Skills are usually inapplicable for lumbering contraptions of barely-contained cosmic fury. Under normal circumstances, Daemon Engines can only use the following Skills: Awareness (Per), Athletics (S), Common Lore (Int), Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Int), Intimidate (WP), Linguistics (Int), Parry (WS), and Psyniscience (Per). Of course, the GM can always allow a Daemon Engine to use other Skills if he deems it appropriate based on the situation.

Talents: All Daemon Engines have the Ambidextrous, Independent Targeting, and Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged) Talents. Additionally, the Heretics can choose up to three Talents from the list of Talents the Daemon trapped within possesses. The Daemon Engine gains these Talents (provided that the Game Master deems them appropriate).

Traits: Daemon Engines gain Traits from several different sources, as listed below:

- The Auto-Stabilised, Daemonforge, Daemon Engine (X) (where X is a value equal to twice the Binding Strength), and Fear (2) Traits.
- The Machine (X) Trait and Unnatural Strength (X) Traits where X is a value determined by consulting **Table 2–8: Daemon Engine Trait Values** on page 51.
- A Trait associated with Movement based on the Shell.
- Up to three Traits from the list of Traits the Daemon trapped within possesses. The Heretics cannot select the Daemonic Trait this way, as it is already encapsulated in the Daemon Engine Trait. The Daemon Engine gains the chosen Traits (provided that the Game Master deems them appropriate).
- Three randomly generated Traits from **Table 2–9: Daemon Engine Traits** (see page 51).

Alignment: The type of Daemon used to create the Daemon Engine determines the Daemon Engine's Alignment.

TABLE 2-8: DAEMON ENGINE TRAIT VALUES

Size Trait Value	Machine Trait Value	Unnatural Strength Trait Value
7	8	4
8	12	6
9	24	8
10	32	10

DAEMON ENGINE TRAITS

Daemon Engines display an almost limitless variety of powers, many of which manifest within the structure of the Shell. This section details a number of Traits that only Daemon Engines can possess, reflecting their horrific idiosyncrasies.

In addition to the Traits all Daemon Engines possess (such as the Daemonforge and Daemon Engine Traits, below), each Daemon Engine possesses 3 additional Traits generated by rolling on **Table 2-9: Daemon Engine Traits**. Each time he rolls, the Heretic creating the Daemon Engine chooses either Unaligned Daemon Engine Traits or the section of the Table associated with the malefic power to which the Daemon Engine is Aligned, and rolls 1d100 plus the bound Daemon's Infamy Characteristic. For Aligned Daemon Engines, the Heretic must roll at least once on the section of **Table 2-9: Daemon Engine Traits** associated with the bound Daemon's dread patron. If the Heretic rolls the same Trait twice, he selects a Trait of his choosing from the section of the Table he rolled on that the Daemon Engine does not already possess.

NEW TRAIT: DAEMONFORGE

A fire burns at the heart of the Daemon Engine, roaring for it to lash out with the ageless fury of the Empyrean.

Once per encounter, the Daemon Engine may re-roll a damage roll in its entirety. If any of the re-rolled dice result in a 9 or 10, the Daemon Engine suffers 1d5 Wounds (ignoring armour and Toughness Bonus) for each of those results.

NEW TRAIT: DAEMON ENGINE (X)

The creature is a hybrid of Daemon and machine, fusing technology and sorcery in a way that is seamless and horrifying, providing incredible protection against virtually all weaponry.

The Daemon Engine gains the From Beyond and The Stuff of Nightmares Traits and is therefore immune to Fear, Pinning, Stunning, Insanity, Poison, Disease, and Psychic Powers that affect the mind. In addition, a Daemon Engine increases its Toughness Bonus by an amount equal to the number in parentheses. Psychic Powers and weapons with the Blessed, Force, or Sanctified Quality ignore this additional Toughness Bonus.

TABLE 2-9: DAEMON ENGINE TRAITS

Unaligned Daemon Engine Traits

1d100 Roll	Trait
01–40	Helcaster
41–70	Helram
71–90	Helmaw
91–110	Slaughterer Limb
111–125	Dire Harpoon
126+	Star of Chaos

Khorne Daemon Engine Traits

1d100 Roll	Trait
01–30	Blood Soaked Fury
31–50	Butcher Scythes
51–70	Mark of Khorne's Contempt
71–90	Ash Cloud
91–110	Harvester
111–130	Black Fire
131+	Bellow of the Battle Lord

Nurgle Daemon Engine Traits

1d100 Roll	Trait
01–30	Hideous Visage
31–50	Eternal Decay
51–70	Pestilent Fog
71–90	Cloud of Flies
91–110	Flesh Cage
111–130	Pit of Despair
131+	Ray of Decomposition

Slaanesh Daemon Engine Traits

1d100 Roll	Trait
01–30	Slaanesh's Beguiling Mists
31–50	Devourer Lash
51–70	Allure of Darkness
71–90	Sensory Overload
91–110	Nightmare Mines
111–130	Whispers of Promised Ecstasy
131+	Serpentine

Tzeentch Daemon Engine Traits

1d100 Roll	Trait
01–30	Warpflame Vents
31–50	Warp Shroud
51–70	Third Eye
71–90	Empyrean Touch
91–110	Warp Accelerator
111–130	Time Sphere
131+	Silver Tower



UNALIGNED TRAITS

The following Traits are Unaligned, and can be applied to any Daemon Engine.

DIRE HARPOON

A twisted amalgamation of flesh and metal, the Dire Harpoon whips around as it seeks new prey.

The Daemon Engine gains a weapon with the listed profile (see **Table 2–10: Daemon Engine Weapons** on page 55). When a Daemon Engine hits a target with a Dire Harpoon, the weapon's spike becomes embedded in the target, and remains there until the target or the Daemon Engine shakes the harpoon loose as a Full Action. So long as the spike is embedded, the Daemon Engine may make an **Opposed Strength Test** against the target as a Half Action; if it wins the Opposed Test, it drags the target 2d10 metres toward itself, plus five additional metres per Degree of Success on the Test.

HELCASTER (DAEMONIC SHIELD)

Flooding the mind with garbled promises of power, a Helcaster distracts and befuddles all around it.

All characters within a number of metres equal to 10 times the Daemon Engine's Willpower Bonus suffer a –10 penalty on Tests. This is a Daemonic Shield.

HELMAW

The Daemon Engine's mouth or entire head transmutes into a Warp-fuelled weapon capable of unleashing torrents of molten skulls or bolts of sparkling energy.

The Daemon Engine gains a weapon with the listed profile (see **Table 2–10: Daemon Engine Weapons** on page 55).

HELRAM

Spiked struts of bone and metal form at the front of the Daemon Engine to create an enormous ram.

The Daemon Engine gains a weapon with the listed profile (see **Table 2–10: Daemon Engine Weapons** on page 55). It can only use this weapon as a part of a Charge Action.

SLAUGHTERER LIMB

At the moment of binding, a long, flexible limb tipped with a deadly blade bursts outwards from the Daemon Engine's shell.

The Daemon Engine gains a weapon with the listed profile (see **Table 2–10: Daemon Engine Weapons** on page 55). Once per Round, it may spend a Reaction to make a Standard Melee Attack Action with this weapon.

STAR OF CHAOS

The Star of Chaos drenches the area with unnatural power, granting unholy vigour to followers of the Ruinous Powers whilst smashing foes apart like an enormous wrecking ball.

The Daemon Engine gains a weapon with the listed profile (see **Table 2–10: Daemon Engine Weapons** on page 55). All Chaos followers within a number of metres equal to the Daemon Engine's Characteristic count as having the Fearless Talent (see page 124 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook).

KHORNE TRAITS

The following Traits are for Khornate Daemon Engines.

ASH CLOUD (DAEMONIC SHIELD)

The Daemon Engine constantly emits clouds of ash, each speck of dust part of some vanquished foe.

Any living creature engaged in melee with the Daemon Engine suffers the Suffocation Damage Condition (see page 257 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) unless it does not need to breathe or has fully sealed armour. This is a Daemonic Shield.

BELLOW OF THE BATTLE LORD

The Daemon vents its fury with an almighty roar that triggers the fear response in all living things.

As a Full Action, the Daemon Engine may unleash a roar that causes all characters within 30 metres to make a Fear Test against a Fear Rating equal to its normal Fear Rating plus 1.

BLACKFIRE

Searing fire of utter darkness hangs on the Daemon Engine's weapons, burning away the vitality and armour of its targets.

All of the Daemon Engine's weapons gain the Corrosive and Irradiated (4) Qualities.

BLOOD SOAKED FURY

The Daemon Engine drips with burning blood, driving it to reckless acts of slaughter.

Whenever the Daemon Engine fails a Weapon Skill Test by three or more Degrees of Failure, it immediately inflicts a single hit with the same weapon upon one randomly determined target (including itself, potentially) within range.

BUTCHER SCYTHES

The Daemon Engine is adorned with dozens of wickedly sharp hooks and blades that lash out at anyone nearby.

The Daemon Engine gains a weapon with the listed profile (see **Table 2–10: Daemon Engine Weapons** on page 55). Whenever the Daemon Engine makes a Charge Action using this weapon, it inflicts a single hit with this weapon upon each enemy it passes within 3 metres of on the way to its target.

HARVESTER

An enormous rotating blade capable of reducing adversaries to mulch in seconds pushes its way out from the Daemon Engine.

The Daemon Engine gains a weapon with the listed profile (see **Table 2–10: Daemon Engine Weapons** on page 55). Whenever the it kills a living creature with the Harvester, it gains the Regeneration (8) Trait until the end of its next Turn.

MARK OF KHORNE'S CONTEMPT

Khorne abhors psykers, and many engines of Khorne feature engraved or painted runes to ward off sorcerous attacks.

Whenever a Psyker targets the Daemon Engine with a Psychic Power, if the result of the roll for his Focus Power Test contains an 8 (as in a 28 or an 81), the power automatically fails and the Psyker suffers 1d10+8 Rending Damage to the Head Location.



NURGLE TRAITS

The following Traits are for Nurglesque Daemon Engines.

CLOUD OF FLIES (DAEMONIC SHIELD)

Surrounding the engine is a visible and tangible aura made of maggot-flies, poisonous wasps, and corpse locusts.

Ranged Attacks against this Daemon Engine suffer a –10 penalty. This is a Daemonic Shield.

ETERNAL DECAY

Armoured panels fall away to reveal the constantly regenerating toxic mess within the Daemon Engine's shell.

The value of the Daemon Engine's Size Trait increases by 1 (to a maximum of 10) and it gains the Regeneration (1d10) Trait.

FLESH CAGE

The Flesh Cage launches sticky knots of decaying bodies fused together with noxious sludge. However, its true terror comes from the victims it leaves alive, stuck in the mass of atrophied limbs.

The Daemon Engine gains a weapon with the listed profile (see **Table 2–10: Daemon Engine Weapons** on page 55). Any character hit by the Flesh Cage must immediately make a Fear Test against a Fear Rating of 3.

HIDEOUS VISAGE

This Daemon Engine's "face" is bloated or skeletal, scabrous or raw, and whatever the specifics, utterly horrifying. To all who behold it, this Daemon Engine is a grim reminder of the fate of all things that draw breath.

Increase the value of this Daemon Engine's Fear Trait by +1.

PESTILENT FOG

Mists of putrescence surround and follow the engine in its wake, causing slow death to those who inhale the fumes.

Any living creature not protected by an environmental seal that begins its Turn within 15 metres of the Daemon Engine must make a **Hard (–20) Toughness Test** or suffer 1d5 Toughness Damage.

PIT OF DESPAIR

The Daemon Engine's mouth opens to reveal a gaping pit of nothingness. A moment later, anything unfastened races towards the Daemon Engine, vanishing into the darkened maw.

The Daemon Engine gains a weapon with the listed profile (see **Table 2–10: Daemon Engine Weapons** on page 55). Any creature with a Size Trait with a value lower than that of the Daemon Engine that is struck by this weapon must make an **Ordinary (+10) Strength Test** or be pulled a number of metres equal to its Degrees of Failure on the Test toward the entropic abyss yawning open before it. If a creature is pulled into the void, it is slain instantly (Heretics can cheat death using Infamy in the usual way). Any unsecured objects in range with a Size Trait with a value lower than that of the Daemon Engine are sucked into its maw as well, vanishing forever.

RAY OF DECOMPOSITION

The engine is capable of harnessing the power of the Warp into a short but potent blast that astronomically accelerates the rate of entropy in anything it touches.

The Daemon Engine gains a weapon with the listed profile (see **Table 2–10: Daemon Engine Weapons** on page 55).

SLAANESH TRAITS

The following Traits are for Slaaneshi Daemon Engines.

ALLURE OF DARKNESS

Strange and lights sounds emanate from the Daemon Engine's shell confusing and tempting any who take but a fleeting glance.

All adversaries suffer a -10 penalty to Dodge and Parry Tests made to avoid the Daemon Engine's attacks. Adversaries engaged in melee with the Daemon Engine must make a **Challenging (+10) Willpower Test** to move away from it.

DEVOURER LASH

A long fleshy tail or tongue sprouts from the Daemon Engine. Infused with sense-shattering chemicals and ever-changing vibrations, the lash leaves its victims reeling with sensation.

The Daemon Engine gains a weapon with the listed profile (see **Table 2-10: Daemon Engine Weapons** on page 55).

NIGHTMARE MINES

As the Daemon Engine moves, small metallic creatures dislodge and skitter towards nearby targets. These repulsive organisms seize anyone within reach, flooding their victims with nightmarish visions before exploding in a blast of energy.

Instead of firing Nightmare Mines like a normal weapon, these malicious walking explosives spread automatically. At the end of each of the Daemon Engine's Turns, each other character within 1d10+6 metres automatically suffers a single hit from a weapon with the following profile: Melee; 1d10+6; Pen 6; Crippling (6).

SENSORY OVERLOAD (DAEMONIC SHIELD)

Foul devices designed to overwhelm the senses of all nearby cover the Daemon Engine's shell. Strobe lights, dirge casters, and pheromone spouts all act to confound enemy combatants.

The first time during an encounter that a living being moves within 3 metres of the Daemon Engine, it must make a **Hard (-20) Perception Test** or be Stunned for one Round. This applies to each creature that enters this proximity, but can only trigger once per encounter per target. This is a Daemonic Shield.

SERPENTINE

Wracked by uncontrolled energy at the moment of binding, the Daemon Engine's shell twists and contorts into the form of a massive serpent.

The Daemon Engine's structure reforms, drastically altering its movement method. Regardless of whether the original Shell was Tracked, Wheeled, had legs or flew/hovered, the Daemon Engine loses any abilities it had from those types of Shells and instead gains the Crawler and Unnatural Agility (6) Traits as well as the Leap Up, Lightning Reflexes, and Sprint Talents.

SLAANESH'S BEGUILING MISTS

An unearthly pleasant scent surrounds the Daemon Engine, beguiling and confusing any who stray into range.

At the end of each of the Daemon Engine's Turns, each living creature within 3 metres of the Daemon Engine must pass a **Difficult (-10) Toughness Test** or roll once on **Table 5-1: Hallucinogenic Effects** (see page 150 of the **BLACK CRUSADE Core Rulebook**) and suffer the effects.

WHISPERS OF PROMISED ECSTASY

As the Daemon Engine strides the battlefield, the lies of Slaanesh follow in its wake. Enticing and frightening, the soft voices promise power and endless sensation to all who submit.

The first time a living creature moves within 30 metres of the Daemon Engine, it must make a **Hard (-20) Willpower Test**. If a target succeeds, it becomes immune to this Daemon Engine's falsehoods and need never Test for them again. If a target fails, however, it gains 1 Corruption Point and is Stunned for 1 Round. Additionally, it must make the **Hard (-20) Willpower Test** again during its next Turn or suffer the effects of this Trait again. This continues until the target passes the Willpower Test during one of its Turns or succumbs to Spawndom.

TZEENTCH TRAITS

The following Traits are for Tzeentchian Daemon Engines.

EMPYREAN TOUCH

The raw stuff of the Warp seeps from the Daemon Engine's gun barrels and slides down its blades. Even the thickest armour presents no challenge to a beast so blessed with Tzeentch's fickle flames.

The Daemon Engine's weapons gain the Overheats, Flame, and Warp Weapon Qualities.

SILVER TOWER

The Daemon Engine's back reshapes to form a short conical tower of shining silver. Within, bonded Thralls chant praises to Tzeentch as arcs of lightning fly in every direction.

The Daemon Engine gains the Psyker Trait and a Psy Rating of 2. The Heretic creating the engine (or the GM) chooses two Psychic Powers (except any that use Corruption) from any of the following lists: Tzeentch, Telepathy or Divination. If the Daemon Engine later receives the Third Eye Trait, its Psy-Rating rises to 5 and it gains three additional Psychic Powers.

THIRD EYE

The Daemon Engine grows a large Warp-eye somewhere on its head or chest. The eye sees everything as it pulses with power and sends tendrils of psychic energy rippling across the Daemon Engine's shell.

The Daemon Engine gains the Psyker and Dark Sight Traits, Psy-Rating 3, and the Psyniscience Skill at Rank 4. The GM chooses three Psychic Powers (except any that use Corruption) from any of the following lists: Tzeentch, Telepathy, or Divination. If the Daemon Engine later receives the Silver Tower Trait, its Psy-Rating rises to 5 and it gains two additional Psychic Powers.

TIME SPHERE

Often appearing as a looping gyroscope with an ever-moving liquid core, the Time Sphere channels the energy of the Vortex to shift the Daemon Engine back and forth in time, if only for a few seconds.

The Daemon Engine can activate the Time Sphere once per combat as a Reaction. The Daemon Engine instantly vanishes as if it had suffered the Chronological Incontinence result on **Table 6–3: Perils of the Warp** (see page 211 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). Upon returning, the Daemon Engine ignores the usual effects but suffers 1d10 Impact Damage that ignores armour and Toughness Bonus.

WARP ACCELERATOR

Floating ominously above the Daemon Engine, this indigo crystal rotates slowly as it sparks with scarcely contained energy. At the Daemon's whim, vast bolts of energy arc away from the crystal, reducing anything they strike to primordial sludge.

The Daemon Engine gains a weapon with the listed profile (see **Table 2–10: Daemon Engine Weapons** below). When used for an Attack Action, the Warp Accelerator also automatically inflicts 1 hit with the listed profile upon 1d5 other randomly chosen targets within range and line of sight.

WARP SHROUD (DAEMONIC SHIELD)

Originally conceived by the Sorcerer-Technocrats of Q'Sal, the Warp Shroud sheaths the Daemon Engine in a nimbus of coloured flame that blocks incoming damage much like a Void Shield.

At the start of each encounter, the Daemon Engine gains 2d10 additional points of armour until the end of the encounter. Psychic Powers and attacks with the Blessed, Force, or Sanctified Quality ignore this armour. Some results of Critical Damage remove this protection.

WARPFLEAME VENTS

Brightly coloured gargoyles appear and disappear at random all over the Daemon Engine's shell, venting gouts of multi-hued fire at anyone that gets too close.

The Daemon Engine gains a weapon with the listed profile (see **Table 2–10: Daemon Engine Weapons** below). Whenever a character uses the Charge Action against the Daemon Engine, that character suffers a single automatic hit from a weapon with the listed profile.



TABLE 2-10: DAEMON ENGINE WEAPONS

Name	Class	Range	RoF	Damage	Pen	Special
Butcher Scythes†	Melee	—	—	1d10+9 R	6	Razor Sharp, Crippling (4)
Devourer Lash	Heavy	35m	S/—/—	1d10 I	0	Accurate, Blast (3), Corrosive, Hallucinogenic (3), Haywire (3), Tearing
Dire Harpoon†	Heavy	20m	S/—/—	1d10+9 I	4	Concussive (2), Inaccurate
Flesh Cage†	Heavy	100m	S/—/—	1d10+7 X	2	Blast (5), Inaccurate, Snare (4), Toxic (2)
Harvester†	Melee	—	—	4d10 R	0	Devastating (4), Flexible, Inaccurate, Unwieldy
Helmaw	Heavy	60m	S/—/3	2d10 X	6	Blast (3), Crippling (3), Flame, Recharge
Helram†	Melee	—	—	3d10+10 I	4	Concussive (4), Devastating (2), Unwieldy
Pit of Despair†	Heavy	10m	S/—/—	1d10 E	0	Spray
Ray of Decomposition	Heavy	80m	S/—/—	2d10+8 E	8	Decay (7), Recharge
Slaughterer Limb†	Melee	—	—	1d10 R	3	Defensive, Flexible, Razor Sharp
Star of Chaos† (Melee)	Melee	—	—	2d10 I	4	Felling (4), Power Field, Shocking, Unwieldy
Star of Chaos† (Ranged)	Heavy	20m	S/—/—	2d10 I	4	Blast (6), Felling (4), Shocking
Warp Accelerator†	Heavy	20m	S/—/—	6d10 E	0	Recharge, Shocking
Warpflame Vents†	Heavy	5m	S/—/—	1d10+9 E	4	Spray, Flame, Hallucinogenic (3)

† This weapon has additional rules. See pages 52–55 for more details.

DAEMON ENGINE MINIONS

Most commanders unleash Daemon Engines, letting the enraged beasts slaughter what they want with no direct control. However, some hold power over these colossal beasts and command them at will, often with a simple gesture. Heretics with an Infamy of 70+ can take a Daemon Engine as a Greater Minion of Chaos using the rules in this section. Commanding the Daemon Engine Minion requires a Daemonic Mastery Test at the start of combat. Daemon Engines that break from their masters act on their own volition (in other words, the GM has license to have them attempt to enact revenge upon their erstwhile masters). Reassuming control requires another Daemonic Mastery Test at the end of combat. A Heretic cannot have more than one Daemon Engine Minion at a time, and whenever the Heretic's Infamy decreases he and must pass another Daemonic Mastery Test to maintain control or permanently lose control over the Daemon Engine (and along with it, likely his life).



POSSESSED HERETICS

"You cannot escape us; we have the scent of your soul."

—Brother Gholun, Possessed Chaos Space Marine

Daemons are formed from the very stuff of the Warp; their presence in the material universe is beyond unnatural, it is anathema. Although a Daemon manifested in reality can appear to be formed of flesh and blood, this is but an illusion, for it is truly formed of the dark energy of the Immaterium, held together by the will of the gods. Consequently, a Daemon can only exist in reality for a relatively short time, and only as a result of a great effusion of eldritch energy, such as that brought on by a ritual, a powerful Warp storm, or Warp rift. In areas where the Sea of Souls spills into reality, such as the Eye of Terror and the Screaming Vortex, a Daemon might be able to exist semi-permanently, but even here there are limitations. In the outer reaches of the Screaming Vortex, the Gloaming Worlds, the tides of the Warp are fickle, and Daemons can be cast back into its depths with little cause. For a Daemon to be assured of its stay in the material universe, it must have a living host.

For many servants of the Dark Gods, there is no higher act of devotion than to willingly become the vessel for a Daemon, acting as host for even an infinitesimally small portion of

their deity's power. This is not always the case for those who truly tread the Path to Glory, however, for while Daemonic possession brings with it the power of the denizens of the Warp, it also holds certain drawbacks. Becoming possessed requires a Heretic to give up a manner of control over his own actions and destiny. Perhaps most importantly, a possessed Heretic cannot reach that ultimate goal of Apotheosis, for an individual possessed by a Daemon cannot, himself, become one. For those who seek short-term power at any cost, however, possession can offer an appealing avenue to rapidly grow in strength—at the mere cost of one's soul.

INVITING THE DAEMON

Daemonic possession can come about in a number of ways, from a Daemon taking advantage of a psyker's moment of weakness to a void ship's Gellar Field failure. Such instances are often short-lived, however, as the presence of the Daemon proves too much for the host's frail flesh to bear, banishing the Daemon back to the Warp. In such incidences, the host's own will also battles the Daemon, which might weaken it, although few individuals are mighty of will enough to do anything but slightly delay the inevitable. Distinct from such uninvited possessions are those enacted with purpose, with the host carefully prepared and the Daemon summoned and bound through ritual. Whether or not the host is willing, a ritual possession results in a stronger bond, ensuring that the subject's body is not obliterated by the Warp energy.

In **BLACK CRUSADE**, a Heretic is most likely to become possessed as a deliberate act, using the Ritual of Possession, as described on page 49. However, it is also possible that a Heretic might be subjected to the ritual against his will, or possession could come about as a consequence of other events in the campaign. While in-game, a Heretic can become possessed willingly or involuntarily, the player should always have a choice in the matter. Possession is a fundamental change to a character, and if the GM feels that such an outcome is warranted based on events in the campaign, he should discuss it with the player and reach an agreement amenable to both parties.

EFFECTS OF POSSESSION

Undergoing Daemonic possession is a fundamental change for a character. Not only does a Possessed Heretic now share his body with a being of the Warp, but that body also undergoes radical changes, as the Daemon within twists and reshapes it to better serve its purposes.

Many Heretics embrace Daemonic possession as a quick path to power. Indeed, Possessed display great strength, fortitude, and a number of unnatural abilities. As the possession progresses further and the Daemon's control waxes, the Possessed Heretic gains additional Traits and abilities. See **The Path of Damnation** on page 58 for the effects of Possession, based on the Heretic's current Corruption. A Possessed Heretic also gains the Psyniscience Skill, the Navigate (Warp) Skill, and the Warp Sense Talent. For all relevant game purposes, a Possessed Heretic counts as a Daemon.

Upon being possessed, a Heretic gains 2d10+5 Corruption Points, to a maximum of 99. If this causes the Heretic to pass one or more Corruption thresholds, he generates Gifts of the Gods as normal in addition to the effects of possession.

UNNATURAL WEAPONS

Many Daemons do not use weapons in the traditional sense, and even in the case of those that do, their weapons are not of steel, but the very stuff of the Warp. When a Daemon possesses a mortal, it rarely shows interest in the weapons of mortals, preferring instead to fight with the weapons its god gave it, whether those are claws, fangs, or a Warp-forged blade. Within a mortal, the Daemon warps and moulds the flesh of its host to mimic either the Daemon's innate weapons, or the favoured weapons of its god. Depending on the nature

of the Daemon, this could mean the Possessed's fingers grow long, grasping claws, or that its hand morphs into an axe-blade of impossibly sharp bone and gristle.

When a Heretic becomes possessed, one or both of his arms mutate and become weapons (additional limbs, such as those gained as a Gift of the Gods, are unaffected). While the exact form of the beweaponed limb depends on the possessing Daemon, it does mean the hand loses most, if not all, of its manual dexterity, and the Heretic cannot use that limb to operate a data-slate, fire a gun, or for similar tasks. To determine if one or both arms are affected, the Heretic's player rolls 1d10. On a result of 1–7, one of the Heretic's arms is unchanged; on a result of 8–10, both limbs transform into weapons. Each affected limb benefits from the Deadly Natural Weapons Trait. If both limbs are affected, the Heretic also gains the Ambidextrous and Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee) Talents if he does not already possess them. If one of the Heretic's limbs already incorporates a weapon, such as a result of the Slayer Limb Gift of the Gods, that limb and weapon are unaffected.

Once per day, a Heretic who prefers to maintain the use of one or both hands can attempt an Opposed Test against the possessing Daemon, as described under **The Struggle for Control** on page 60. If he succeeds, one or both of his hands twist back into a usable form, at least for the time being.

THE DAEMON WITHIN

A Possessed Heretic effectively shares his body with another character, the Daemon. This has a number of benefits and drawbacks, as well as considerations for roleplaying. When a Heretic becomes possessed, the GM and player work together to select an appropriate Daemon from a **BLACK CRUSADE** supplement. If the Heretic becomes possessed as a result of the Ritual of Possession, as is usually the case, the Ritual used to initially summon the Daemon determines its type. If the GM agrees, the Daemon's Characteristics can instead be randomly determined using **Table 2-11: Daemon Characteristics**.

When selecting or creating a Daemon to possess the Heretic, the GM and player must select the Chaos God to which the possessing Daemon is Aligned (which is often dictated by the type of Daemon). If the character is Aligned, the Daemon must be a Daemon of that Chaos God. If the character is Unaligned, the Daemon can be of any alignment, including Unaligned. An Unaligned Heretic possessed by an Aligned Daemon counts as being Aligned to that Daemon's god for all game purposes.

TABLE 2-11: DAEMON CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristic	Khornate	Nurglesque	Slaaneshi	Tzeentchian	Unaligned
Weapon Skill	50+3d10	35+3d10	40+3d10	10+2d10	30+3d10
Ballistic Skill	40+3d10	30+2d10	35+2d10	35+2d10	20+2d10
Strength	45+3d10	40+3d10	25+3d10	25+3d10	30+3d10
Toughness	35+3d10	50+3d10	10+2d10	20+2d10	20+2d10
Agility	30+2d10	10+2d10	45+3d10	25+3d10	20+2d10
Intelligence	20+2d10	25+2d10	20+3d10	45+3d10	20+2d10
Perception	20+2d10	45+3d10	20+2d10	30+3d10	25+3d10
Willpower	25+3d10	20+3d10	30+2d10	50+3d10	20+3d10
Fellowship	10+2d10	20+2d10	50+3d10	40+2d10	10+2d10
Infamy	15+5d10	15+5d10	15+5d10	15+5d10	5+3d10

TABLE 2-12: THE POSSESSION TRACK

CP Total	Possession Traits	Daemonic Manifestations	Invoke the Daemon
01–35	Daemonic (2), Fear (2), Unnatural Strength (2)	1st Manifestation	2 times per session
36–55	Daemonic (3), Fear (2), Unnatural Strength (3)	2nd Manifestation	4 times per session
56–70	Daemonic (4), Fear (2), Unnatural Strength (3)	3rd Manifestation	5 times per session
71–85	Daemonic (4), Dark-sight, Fear (3), From Beyond, Unnatural Strength (4)	—	No limit
86–99	Daemonic (5), Dark-sight, Fear (3), From Beyond, Unnatural Strength (5)	4th Manifestation	No limit
100	The Daemon consumes the Heretic utterly—the Heretic is removed from play (see Final Destiny , below).		

LORDS OF THE WARP

When selecting the Daemon to inhabit a Possessed Heretic, it should generally be a Lesser Daemon or Daemonic Beast. Daemonic Herald, Greater Daemons, and Daemon Princes can certainly possess mortals, but due to the power of such Daemons, their essence can scarcely be contained by mortal shells. Such possessions tend to be extremely short-lived, with the possessed swiftly overwhelmed by the energies within. The GM can represent this by applying penalties to the Opposed Tests the Heretic makes to resist the Daemon's control, and by increasing the amount of Corruption the Heretic gains interacting with the Daemon.

POSSESSED HERETICS

A Possessed Heretic gains numerous new abilities and other benefits, showcasing unnatural strength, resilience, and other unholy powers. However, regardless of whether the Heretic becomes host to a Daemon out of devotion to the Dark Gods, or desire to increase his own power, few Daemons are gladly subservient to a mortal. The Heretic must contend with the Daemon for control of his own body and mind. At first, the Heretic is likely to remain the dominant personality in his own body, but as time goes on he finds the Daemon influencing his behaviour more overtly and even taking complete control of his body for extended periods of time. Such is the price of power.

THE PATH OF DAMNATION

A Daemon can more easily possess a vessel already tainted by the Warp and, over time, a possessing Daemon exerts further influence over its host. To represent the way in which the Daemon allows its host further use of its powers as its dominion over him grows, as a Possessed Heretic's Corruption Point total increases, he gains additional Daemonic Manifestations, along with other effects. A Heretic with a higher Corruption Point total when he first becomes possessed also gains a correspondingly greater number of Manifestations.

To determine the effects of possession, consult **Table 2-12: The Possession Track**. The effects include Daemonic Manifestations and opportunities to Invoke the Daemon (see page 60). The Heretic has all of the Traits listed under the Possession Traits entry corresponding to his current CP Total. If the Heretic also has a Trait with a value (X) from another source, such as a Gift of the Gods or Mark of Chaos, he adds the two values together.

FINAL DESTINY

A Possessed Heretic who reaches 100 Corruption Points cannot become a Daemon Prince, as his form is already home to a Daemon, nor does he become a wretched Chaos Spawn. When a Possessed Heretic reaches 100 CP, the Daemon within takes complete control. In a blaze of unholy power, the Heretic's mortal frame is utterly reshaped—or ripped apart. Using the host's body as its entrance, the Daemon manifests into reality, free to do as it pleases. Depending on the conditions, the Daemon might have hours or days, and possibly longer in the lower reaches of the Screaming Vortex. The Daemon's actions at this point are decided by the GM, and should be based on previous events involving the Possessed Heretic. Depending on its treatment, the Daemon might ignore the other Heretics, gloat over them, or attempt to destroy or enslave them. In any case, the Heretic is removed from play, although the GMs might wish to allow the player to temporarily control the Daemon during its foray into reality.

EXORCISING THE DAEMON

In rare cases, it might be possible to exorcise a Possessed Heretic, casting the Daemon out of his body and banishing it to the Warp. This might come about because the Heretic changes his mind after realising just what possession entails, among other reasons. There are many possible forms the exorcism rites might take—an exorcism performed by a priest of the Adeptus Ministorum bears little resemblance to one performed by a Word Bearers Dark Apostle—but all are dangerous to all involved, not least of which the possessed individual himself. An exorcism is likely to take the form of a Ritual, with the exorcist, and possibly the Possessed, making a series of Daemonic Mastery Tests (see page 229 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) in an attempt to overpower and drive out the Daemon. At the very least, the exorcist must possess the Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) Skill.

Should the exorcism succeed, the formerly Possessed Heretic loses all abilities he gained from the possession, although he retains any Corruption gained. In addition, the individual suffers additional effects, as described in the **Ritual of Possession** on page 49.

DAEMONIC MANIFESTATIONS

When a Possessed Heretic gains a Daemonic Manifestation as directed by **Table 2-12: The Possession Track**, the Heretic's player rolls on **Table 2-13: Daemonic Manifestations** and gains the resulting Manifestation. The player may modify the result up or down by any amount, gaining Corruption Points equal to the amount he increased or decreased it. If the result would be a Manifestation the Heretic already has, he **must** modify the result until it is one he does not already possess, and gains the corresponding amount of Corruption Points.

Chaos Aura

An aura of Warp energy ripples around the Possessed, deflecting blows and disintegrating bullets. The Heretic counts as having a Force Field with a Protection Rating equal to the possessing Daemon's Willpower Characteristic. The Field never Overloads, but any time the roll to avoid Damage results in a double (such as 22, 33, 77, etc.), the Heretic gains 2 Corruption Points.

Daemonic Essence

The Daemon within sustains the Possessed Heretic's form despite horrendous injuries that would kill a mortal several times over. The Heretic gains +5 Wounds.

Daemonic Fire

Warp-fire spills from the Possessed's eyes, mouth, and claws. The Heretic's natural weapons gain the Flame Quality and their Damage Type changes to Energy. Further, he counts as being equipped with a ranged weapon with the following profile, where X equals the Heretic's Corruption Bonus: (Basic; 15m; S/-/-; 1d10+X E; Pen X; Clip —; Reload —; Flame, Spray, Recharge).

Daemonic Speed

The Possessed chases down prey with feral swiftness. He gains the Unnatural Agility (3) Trait (or increases the value of this Trait by 3 if he already possesses it).

Daemonic Strength

The Possessed shows an unholy strength, his mutated muscles fortified with the power of the Daemon dwelling within. He increases the value of his Unnatural Strength Trait by 3.

Daemonic Venom

The Possessed's beweaponed limbs drip with noxious, Warp-spawned venom. The Heretic's natural weapons gain the Toxic (X) Quality, where X equals his Corruption Bonus.

Daemonic Visage

The Possessed's appearance projects an aura of unnatural horror. Whenever a character fails a Fear Test caused by the Possessed Heretic, he doubles his Degrees of Failure. The Heretic also gains a +20 bonus to Intimidate Tests.

Rending Talons

The Possessed Heretic's weapon-limbs are serrated or barbed. His natural weapons gain the Tainted and Tearing Qualities.

TABLE 2-13: DAEMONIC MANIFESTATIONS

1d10 Roll	Manifestation
1	Chaos Aura
2	Rending Talons
3	Daemonic Fire
4	Unholy Resilience
5	Daemonic Strength
6	Daemonic Speed
7	Vorpal Claws
8	Daemonic Venom
9	Daemonic Visage
10	Daemonic Essence

Unholy Resilience

The Possessed Heretic's unholy form is all but proof against mortal weapons. He gains the Unnatural Toughness (3) Trait (or increases the value of this Trait by 3 if he already possesses it).

Vorpal Claws

The Possessed Heretic's claws are supernaturally sharp, shearing through bone as easily as ceramite. His natural weapons gain the Razor Sharp and Felling (X) Qualities, and a Penetration of X, where X equals the Heretic's Corruption Bonus.



Invoking the Daemon

When a Possessed Heretic Invokes the Daemon, it means he is voluntarily giving over a greater amount of influence to the Daemon. This allows the Heretic to briefly wield a greater portion of the Daemon's power, but also has permanent consequences, bringing the Daemon closer to complete control.

A Possessed Heretic can Invoke the Daemon a number of times each session based on his Corruption Points (see **Table 2–12: The Possession Track**, on page 58). When he does so, the Heretic chooses one or more of the possessing Daemon's Characteristics to substitute for his own, and may also choose one or more of the Daemon's Traits, Talents, Skills, special abilities, or weapons to manifest. These might include anything from a Flamer of Tzeentch's Psychic Power to a Daemonette's Soporific Musk to a Bloodletter's Hellblade, but the GM has the final decision on which of the Daemon's assets and abilities are available.

In Narrative Time, the effects last for one Skill or Characteristic Test, or for the duration of one scene, at the GM's discretion. In Structured Time, the effects last for a number of Rounds equal to the Heretic's Corruption Bonus. Each time a Possessed Heretic invokes the Daemon, he gains 1 Corruption Point for each Characteristic he substitutes, and for each Talent, Trait, Skill, or other ability he gains.

THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL

As any devotee of Chaos should well know, Daemons can never be trusted. While possession offers a quick path to power, the Heretic also sacrifices an amount of control over his own mind and body. The longer the possessing Daemon resided within him, the more it will take command of the Heretic, subsuming his own personality and desires.

At certain times, the possessing Daemon attempts to take control of the Possessed Heretic. Even if the Daemon is a willing inhabitant of the Heretic's body, such struggles are inevitable. Daemons lust for power and are loathe to bow to mortals.

The GM decides when the Daemon attempts to exert control, based on the personality of the particular Daemon and the needs of the campaign. The following are some suggestions for events that might prompt a Daemon to attempt to take control:

- The Heretic uses xp to purchase an Advance Aligned to the Daemon's Opposing god.
- The Heretic acts against the Daemon's nature or the tenets of the Daemon's god.
- The Heretic Invokes the Daemon (see above).
- The Heretic attempts to wield a Daemon Weapon.
- The Heretic's Corruption Bonus increases.

Mastering the Daemon

When the Daemon attempts to take control, the Possessed Heretic must reassert his mastery in the unholy union. To do so, the Heretic and Daemon make an Opposed Test. The Heretic chooses either his Willpower or Infamy Characteristic for this Test (note that he cannot Invoke the Daemon to substitute a Characteristic). The Daemon uses its Willpower or the Heretic's Corruption Total (treating it just like a normal Characteristic), whichever is higher. This Test requires a Full Action, and the Heretic must make it at the first opportunity.

ROLEPLAYING A POSSESSED HERETIC

Possession offers great roleplaying opportunities, as a Possessed Heretic is really two characters: the Heretic and the Daemon. A player might portray both of these individuals, developing separate personalities and motives for each. Particularly when the Daemon takes temporary control, this could lead to the player acting against the interests of his character. Alternatively, the GM might maintain control of the Daemon, occasionally (or frequently) having it speak to the Heretic, either to gloat, threaten, or attempt to influence his behaviour. The Daemon might become as much a member of the warband as any other character—or it might become a deadly enemy, albeit one kept uncomfortably close.

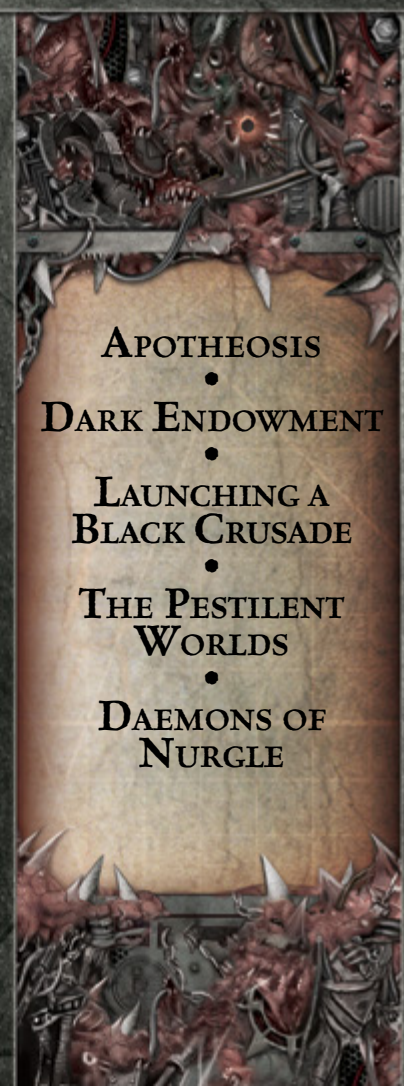
If the Heretic wins the Opposed Test, he maintains control for the time being, and there are no further consequences. If the Daemon wins, it takes control of the Heretic for 1 Round for each Degree by which it won the Test, or one minute for each Degree in Narrative Time. During this period, the Daemon dictates the Heretic's activities, choosing how he spends his Actions in combat and speaking through him. Usually, this means the GM temporarily controls the Heretic, but the GM could alternatively allow the player to retain control, with the understanding that he is making his decisions based on the Daemon's desires, and not his usual character's intentions.





LORDS OF ENTROPY

APOTHEOSIS
•
DARK ENDOWMENT
•
LAUNCHING A
BLACK CRUSADE
•
THE PESTILENT
WORLDS
•
DAEMONS OF
NURGLE



CHAPTER III: LORDS OF ENTROPY

"You should feel honoured. Your death allows for my birth. Your mortality shall make me immortal!"

—Lord Khanchorus Boul, upon his Apotheosis

The Lord of Decay attracts many of his most devout worshippers from those seeking to avoid what awaits all mortals: the endless sleep of the grave. In welcoming his pestilent embrace, diseased tissue becomes inured to that which would fell untainted flesh, and unnaturally resilient forms keep death's touch one small measure at bay. Some of his greatest champions might exist in such a putrefying grace for centuries and longer, corpse-like but not corpses. Skin might dry and peel away, corpulent organs leak vile liquids, buboes grow with pus and erupt, but eyes remain energetic in their devotion to Nurgle. They live but to serve their beloved Grandfather, and to share his love with others.

Yet for others, even this blessed state is not enough. To have witnessed the glories of Nurgle and his Daemons is to have seen legendary beings who have transcended mortality. For many, it is a taste that consumes all else, and their lives exist only to surpass life itself. Nurgle embraces such drives, for he embodies not only death, but rebirth as his

diseased gifts kill endless populations that serve as bountiful food for parasitical worms, flies, and his other children. This quest for transcendent power is not limited only to those who worship the God of Flies, of course, as the thirst for power is what drives all within the Screaming Vortex and beyond in their worship of the Dark Gods. For these seeking the power to defeat death itself, there is no price too high or sin too great.

In this chapter, Heretics can learn more of these paths to darker and greater power. They can launch mighty Black Crusades against the hated Imperium and its Corpse-God, to conquer new domains, enslave new vassals, and uncover new treasures. The secrets of Apotheosis stand revealed, allowing players to continue their characters after transformation to Daemon Princes: immortals of the Warp who can tease, corrupt, and bedevil mortals such as they were, all for the glory of their patron god. Heretics learn of the other, horrid fate that awaits those who have failed to walk the Dark Path properly: transformation into a Spawn of Chaos. They also discover more of the Screaming Vortex, and new worlds that can aid in their quest for power. Nurgle's touch has dripped its necrotic blessings across this unnatural region, from blighted Pyurultide to the worm-ridden Writhing World to the foetid, choked swamps of Mire. Other locales, such as Guelph, which hosts terrible Daemon Engines, or Hindrance's Daemon-filled skies, also can offer Heretics new bounties should they prove worthy. Those Heretics questing to transcend the Vortex and escape its

grasping embrace can venture to the Frozen Heart and the Ascendant Spiral, where the final challenges await all those who would dare risk their existence against the ultimate reward.



APOTHEOSIS

"I have slain worlds and conquered stars, and for this I have received a reward beyond reckoning."

—Mukarr'ath, the Severer of Souls,
Lord of the Broken Spire

For those who tread the path to glory, there is no higher goal than that of Apotheosis—attaining the mantle of a Daemon Prince. As a Heretic performs ever more acts in the name of his god, they become saturated with the energies of the Warp, expressed through physical mutation. For most of those who do not simply die on the battlefield or at the hands of an assassin, the gifts of the gods eventually prove too much, their mind and body shattered and reformed as a Chaos Spawn. A very rare few, however, are able to tolerate the touch of Chaos and win the favour of the gods. Those exceptional individuals transcend mortality, joining the host of Daemons for eternity.

Each Daemon Prince is a unique and terrifying entity, combining the guile, skill, and power of the mortal they once were with the overwhelming power of a Daemon. Those who attain such a goal are reborn, to begin a new existence as an immortal being of the Warp.

BECOMING A DAEMON PRINCE

As explained in the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, a Heretic reaches the goal of Apotheosis when they obtain 100 Corruption Points and possess the requisite Infamy score previously determined by the GM. The default assumption in **BLACK CRUSADE** is that a player must retire his character when the Heretic reaches 100 Corruption Points. However, with the GM's permission, a Heretic who meets the requirements can ascend to the mantle of Daemon Prince and continue play as such a potent entity, using the rules in this section.

Becoming a Daemon Prince is not simply a matter of absorbing the corrupting power of the Warp; it requires the intervention of the gods. Unless one of the Chaos Gods has selected the Heretic for his great honour, meeting the CP and Infamy requirements is not enough. Only the will of a Chaos God can elevate a mortal to the status of a Daemon. Without it, a mortal so imbued with the power of the Warp is destined for an end as a mewling Chaos Spawn. And, while the gods can sometimes set aside their never-ending power struggle in pursuit of common goals, they are far too jealous to share their champions. Consequently, Apotheosis requires a patron deity. Only a Heretic who is Aligned to one of the Gods of Chaos and has the corresponding Mark of Chaos can become a Daemon Prince.

An individual so infused with the power of the Warp who lacks the guiding hand of a patron god would undergo the terrible transformation to a Chaos Spawn. However, some individuals, while not having devoted themselves to a single god, have accomplished such feats as to catch the eyes of the Four. Such mighty and fated individuals might find themselves in a delicate balancing act, attempting to maintain the favour of the gods, lest their body succumb to limitless mutation. An Unaligned character who reaches 100 CP after reaching the

required Infamy remains a normal character for the time being. If the Heretic becomes Aligned to a Chaos God and gains that god's Mark of Chaos, he becomes a Daemon Prince. However, if the Heretic slips below the Infamy threshold at any time before meeting these criteria, he immediately becomes a Chaos Spawn. Even the smallest slip in the eyes of the ruinous ones is fatal.

Under most circumstances, the transformation into a Daemon Prince should occur at the end of a game session or during a suitable period of downtime. Such an event is a dramatic and momentous occasion, but also one that requires some considerable modifications to the Heretic's character sheet. Rather than delay the action while making the changes during the session, it is best to wait until after. However, the Apotheosis of a Heretic is a rare and important event, a defining moment in any character's arc. However it occurs, the GM and player should work together to describe narratively the transformation, whether it be on the middle of the battlefield surrounded by enemies and allies, or alone before a private altar. Chaos is never predictable, and the transformation into a Daemon Prince could happen instantaneously in a pillar of dark flame, or it might happen slowly, over many agonising hours, days, or longer. A Heretic might even vanish, sucked into the Warp without warning, only to reappear days, years, or centuries later at the head of a Daemonic legion bent on chaos and destruction.

A Character Sheet for Daemon Princes can be found on pages 143–144 of this volume, and is also available for download at www.FantasyFlightGames.com.



DAEMON PRINCE CHARACTERS

There is a reason the scions of Chaos strive for Apotheosis—Daemon Princes are terrifyingly potent beings. A Heretic who becomes a Daemon Prince gains a number of advantages immediately, and can attain further abilities in the form of Daemonic Gifts. The changes described in this section are applied to the character when the transformation into a Daemon Prince occurs, which will generally be handled at the end of (or between) game sessions.

DAEMONIC STATURE

Almost without exception, Daemon Princes manifested in the material universe are massive beings, as befits such powerful entities. Daemon Princes also gain a number of traits to reflect their nature as creatures of the Warp.

A Heretic who becomes a Daemon Prince gains the following benefits:

- Increase his Strength and Toughness Characteristics by +10.
- Increase his Wounds by +10.
- He gains the following Traits: Daemonic (4), Dark-sight, Fear (3), From Beyond, Deadly Natural Weapons, Size (7), The Stuff of Nightmares, Unnatural Strength (3), and Warp Instability. If the Heretic already possesses the Unnatural Strength, Daemonic, or Fear Traits, he adds the existing values to the values of the Traits given above instead.
- A human Heretic gains the Unnatural Toughness (3) Trait if he does not already possess the Unnatural Toughness Trait.
- Although a Chaos Space Marine who becomes a Daemon Prince might retain his Power Armour, such is his new stature that the Black Carapace Implant does not prevent enemies from gaining a bonus to hit him due to his Size Trait.
- Due to his size and power, a Daemon Prince's Natural Weapons have the following profile: Melee; 2d10 I or R; Pen 6.

DAEMON PRINCE SPECIAL RULES

In addition to the Characteristic increases and Traits listed above, a Daemon Prince gains the Daemonic Presence special rule and one or more special rules and Characteristic increases based on his particular patron deity. In addition, a Daemon Prince of Nurgle or Slaanesh gains the Psyker Trait if he does not already possess it, allowing the character to spend experience points to purchase the Psy Rating Talent and Psychic Powers if he so desires. The Daemon Prince does not gain a Psy Rating or any Psychic Powers automatically, but now has the option to purchase them as Advances.

Although extraordinarily rare, it is possible for a psyker or sorcerer to forsake his cowardly ways and become one of Khorne's mightiest champions. If a Heretic with the Psyker Trait becomes a Daemon Prince of Khorne, he permanently loses the Psyker Trait, the Psy Rating Talent, and all Psychic Powers. The Heretic should consider himself lucky that the Brazen Lord of Skulls has seen fit to overlook his past transgressions and purge him of his sorcerous impurity!

Daemonic Presence

All enemies within 20 metres of a Daemon Prince suffer a –20 penalty to Willpower Tests. As well as metaphysical and existential dread, mortals experience Daemonic Presence in a number of horrifying ways. The exact perception mortals experience depends on the nature of the Daemon Prince. For instance, in the presence of a Daemon Prince of Khorne, someone might taste the irony tang of blood, or feel a sense of uncontrollable rage; in the presence of a Daemon Prince of Slaanesh, a mortal might feel drugged or an inexplicable urge to comply with the Daemon's wishes, whereas in the presence of a Daemon Prince of Nurgle, a character becomes suddenly and violently ill, while plants in the vicinity abruptly wilt and rot.

Daemon Prince of Khorne

Daemon Princes of Khorne increase their Strength by a further +10. In addition, they gain both of the following abilities:

- **Blood for the Blood God:** Daemons of Khorne suffer no penalties from gore and blood—all Critical Effects involving gore and blood (such as requiring an Agility Test not to fall over) do not apply to Daemons of Khorne.
- **Rage of Khorne:** A Daemon Prince of Khorne can enter a Frenzy (see the Frenzy Talent on page 124–125 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) as a Free Action. In addition, while Frenzied, a Daemon Prince of Khorne gains an additional +10 bonus to Weapon Skill Tests.

Daemon Prince of Nurgle

Daemon Princes of Nurgle increase their Toughness by a further +10. In addition, they choose one of the following abilities:

- **Aura of Pestilence:** All mortals within 20 metres of the Daemon Prince who are not devoted to Nurgle suffer a –10 penalty to Toughness Tests.
- **Unnatural Resilience:** The Daemon Prince may re-roll any failed Toughness Test (he must accept the second result).

Daemon Prince of Slaanesh

Daemon Princes of Slaanesh increase their Fellowship by +10. In addition, they choose one of the following abilities:

- **Beguiling Aura:** All mortals within 20 metres of the Daemon Prince who are not followers of Slaanesh suffer a –10 penalty to Willpower Tests. This is cumulative with the effects of Daemonic Presence. In addition, Dodge and Parry Tests against a Daemon Prince of Slaanesh's attacks suffer a –10 penalty.
- **Impossibly Persuasive:** The Daemon Prince may re-roll any failed Fellowship Test (he must accept the second result).



Daemon Prince of Tzeentch

Daemon Princes of Tzeentch increase their Willpower by +10. In addition, they choose one of the following abilities:

- **Master of Fate:** Whenever the Daemon Prince spends an Infamy Point, roll 1d10. On a result of a 6+, the Daemon Prince gains the benefit of the Infamy Point, but it does not count as spent. In addition, the Daemon Prince gains an extra 1d5 Infamy Points at the beginning of each game session, which are lost if not used by the end of the session.
- **Master of Sorcery:** The Daemon Prince may re-roll any failed Focus Power Test (he must accept the second result). However, if the result of either die on the second roll is a 9, it causes Psychic Phenomena (see page 210 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). If Psychic Phenomena would be triggered regardless, each 9 he rolls adds +10 to the result on **Table 6-2: Psychic Phenomena** instead.

DAEMON PRINCES AND GEAR

Although Daemon Princes wield near-limitless power and are beyond such mortal concerns as pain and death, they do face certain limitations, primarily as a result of their increased size. In addition to the problems posed by small spaces, the main drawback is a restriction on the equipment and weapons the Daemon Prince can use. For most champions of Chaos, such concerns pale in comparison to the rewards of Apotheosis.

Due to their size, Daemon Princes have significant restrictions in their use of weapons, armour, and other gear. This is ultimately at the discretion of the GM, but as a guideline, Daemon Princes cannot use weapons or armour manufactured for human-sized creatures or even for Chaos Space Marines, with the exceptions noted below.

Due to the whims of the Warp and the nature of the transformation a Heretic undergoes when he becomes a Daemon Prince, some weapons and armour in his possession at the time of his Apotheosis remain usable in his new form. Depending on the item in question, this might mean that the item actually transforms along with the Daemon Prince, increasing in size, form, or even melding with his daemonic flesh. All Daemon Weapons, Legacy Weapons, and Corrupted Weapons remain usable, regardless of their size or type.

In addition, at the player's choice, any armour worn by the Heretic at the time of his Apotheosis melds with the Daemon Prince, becoming a part of his new form. The Daemon Prince retains the Armour Points and any other benefits provided by the armour (subject to the GM's discretion), but no longer has the option of removing it. If the player chooses not to retain the armour this way, the Heretic's expanding form shatters the armour, destroying it.

Bionics remain a part of the Heretic, although they inevitably fuse with his Daemonic flesh in unnatural and disturbing ways, making the division between machine and flesh far from clear. In game terms, a Daemon Prince retains the benefits of implants, unless the GM rules that a particular benefit is not appropriate for a Daemon. However, a Daemon Prince does not

PSYCHIC DAEMON PRINCES

As creatures of the Warp, it is no surprise that many Daemon Princes manifest psychic abilities, with the notable exception of Daemon Princes of Khorne. Whether the Daemon Prince was already a psyker or sorcerer in its mortal life or gained the ability to channel the Warp as one of the rewards of Apotheosis, Daemon Princes interact with the Warp in a different way than mortals. A Daemon Prince with the Psy Rating Trait uses Psychic Powers as a Daemonic psyker, regardless of his Archetype.

retain any benefits of bionic replacement limbs. In effect, the character's new Warp-flesh restores his lost limbs or fuses with the existing bionics. In either case, the benefits of bionic limbs are subsumed in the advantages of becoming a Daemon Prince.

APOTHEOSIS AND GIFTS OF THE GODS

Although it may resemble its previous form in many ways, a Daemon Prince is no longer a creature of flesh and blood. The mutations that afflicted the mortal frame, for good or ill, vanish, though they might be echoed in the new form.

Upon his ascension, a Daemon Prince may choose to remove any number of his Gifts of the Gods of his choice; the effects of the chosen Gifts, positive and negative, are removed from the character. For each Gift of the Gods he removes in this way, the Daemon Prince gains 5 Favour, which he can immediately use to purchase Daemonic Gifts (see **Dark Endowment** page 70).



DAEMONIC MINIONS

Upon joining the infernal legions, a Daemon Prince leaves behind many trappings of his former existence, from equipment to allies and contacts, and perhaps even his most loyal followers. It is perhaps ironic that a Heretic who has spent his life acquiring followers and building a warband for the goal of becoming a Daemon Prince might find himself abandoning those very mortal followers to lead dread legions of Daemons.

Many Minions that might accompany Heretics are less appropriate for a Daemon Prince. This might be because the Daemon Prince now traverses environments that are lethal to mortals, because it finds itself in need of more potent followers, or simply because those who it once considered its loyal followers now find themselves beneath its notice, for Daemon Princes do not view the universe as does a mortal. In lieu of mercenaries, beasts, servitors, and other mortal followers, Daemon Princes often amass retinues of subservient Daemons to follow them. These Daemons might represent soldiers placed at their command by their patron god, rivals defeated and forced into obedience, or for the most potent of Daemon Princes, lesser entities formed from the Warp through sheer force of will.

Acquiring Daemonic Minions

Instead of following the normal Minion creation rules, upon gaining a new Minion of Chaos Talent or replacing an existing Minion, a Daemon Prince can select an appropriate Lesser Daemon NPC from the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook or a **BLACK CRUSADE** supplement, subject to the GM's approval. The Minion possesses all the Characteristic values, Talents, Skills, Traits, gear, and special rules as described in the NPC entry, and the player cannot choose additional elements or modify the entry. Unless the GM decides otherwise, a Daemonic Minion must have the same patron deity as its master.

A Daemon Prince can replace any number of existing Minions with Daemons at the time of his Apotheosis, or can obtain Daemon Minions later, as normal for gaining new Minions or replacing former Minions.



ADVANCING AS A DAEMON PRINCE

Daemon Princes continue to gain and spend experience points just like any other Heretic. However, as Daemons, Daemon Princes consist of the very essence of their patron Chaos God. **Therefore, Daemon Princes are always Aligned to their patron deity.** Daemon Princes do not check Alignment, nor can their Alignment ever change, regardless of how many Advances they have purchased along any path of Devotion. The xp cost for Advances is calculated as normal, based on the Daemon Prince's Alignment.

FAVOUR

As Daemons, Daemon Princes are creatures of the Warp—walking embodiments of Corruption. Consequently, Daemon Princes no longer gain Corruption, nor can they decrease it; their Corruption is permanently fixed at 100. Instead, Daemon Princes gain Favour, representing their position in the eyes of their god, which translates into increased power over the Warp and mastery of their own Daemonic abilities. Like a Characteristic, Favour is measured on a scale of 0 to 100. Unlike Infamy or Corruption, when a Daemon Prince leverages his Favour to obtain new abilities, it decreases his current Favour total (see **Using Favour**, on page 68).

Unlike Corruption, which can be gained as a reward or as a punishment for a failing, Favour is always a positive thing. However, a Daemon Prince who fails his patron can lose Favour, as his god takes back a measure of the power and authority over the Warp previously granted to the Daemon Prince.

Daemon Princes continue to gain—and lose—Infamy as normal, representing their reputation in the eyes of both mortals and their fellow Daemons. However, as befits their new status, the expectations on Daemon Princes, both in the eyes of mortals and the gods, are higher. Consequently, Daemon Princes must generally accomplish suitably more impressive feats than a mortal in order to gain the same amount of Infamy.

DAEMONIC MINIONS

The following is a list of appropriate Daemons to serve as Minions for a Daemon Prince, divided by Chaos God. As always, the GM has final say on whether or not a player can select a particular Minion. Daemon Engine Minions, as described on page 55, also make excellent subjects for Daemon Princes, serving in their warbands and armies.

- **Khorne:** Bloodletter (**BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 351), Juggernaut (**BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 355), Flesh Hound (**THE TOME OF BLOOD**, page 89).
- **Nurgle:** Plaguebearer (**BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 355), Beast of Nurgle (**THE TOME OF DECAY**, page 114), Nurglings (**THE TOME OF DECAY**, page 115), Plague Drone (**THE TOME OF DECAY**, page 115).
- **Slaanesh:** Daemonette (**BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 353), Fiend of Slaanesh (**THE TOME OF EXCESS**, page 80), Steed of Slaanesh (**THE TOME OF EXCESS**, page 81).
- **Tzeentch:** Horror (**BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 354), Screamer (**BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, page 356), Flamer (**THE TOME OF FATE**, page 104), Disc of Tzeentch (**THE TOME OF FATE**, page 104).

Gaining Favour

As a foremost leader in the Daemonic legions, a Daemon Prince has the eye of his god far more than he ever did as a mortal. This is both a boon and a hindrance, for just as the Chaos Gods reward and punish their mortal followers, so do they their Daemonic servants. A Daemon Prince gains Favour by advancing his god's cause, whether by slaying the servants of the Corpse-God, leading his legions in battle against the Daemons of rival gods, or corrupting mortals. Likewise, a Daemon Prince loses Favour when he fails his god or acts contrary to his god's path.

Daemon Princes gain Favour by advancing the cause of Chaos, and of their god in particular. The possibilities for obtaining the Favour of the Ruinous Powers are endless, but some examples are shown in **Table 3-1: Favour Rewards**. These are examples and guidelines, and it is always the GM's decision as to whether or not a particular action is worthy of Favour, and how much. In some cases, the GM might determine that a random amount is appropriate, representing the fickle nature of the Chaos Gods. In these cases, 1d5 is usually sufficient, possibly modified by +1 or -1 based on the deed.

As a prominent leader amongst the Daemonic legions of his god, a Daemon Prince faces higher expectations than nearly any mortal follower of Chaos. Actions that would win considerable Corruption for an aspiring champion of Chaos are simply expected for a Daemon Prince, but might nonetheless be worth 1 or 2 Favour.

While mortal servants of the Ruinous Powers often pay homage to all of the gods, a Daemon Prince is a sworn vassal of one Chaos God. And whereas service to Chaos can be worthy of Favour, Daemon Princes primarily win the rewards of their patron deity by advancing its interests. This can bring the Daemon Prince into opposition with the servants and Daemons of rival gods just as readily as it can the forces of the Imperium. A Daemon Prince is a player in the Great Game between the Chaos Gods, and conflict with the servants, both mortal and Daemonic, of the other Ruinous Powers is inevitable.

TABLE 3-1: FAVOUR REWARDS

Act Glorifying Chaos	Gain
Slaying a powerful champion of the Imperium, such as a Space Marine Chapter Master or Ordo Malleus Inquisitor.	1-2 Favour
Leading an army of mortal servants of Chaos to victory in battle over the forces of the Imperium; defeating a rival Daemon Prince in battle; overtaking a cult of a rival god.	3-5 Favour
Leading a Daemonic legion to victory against the forces of a rival Chaos God; corrupting a defender of the Imperium, such as a Space Marine Captain or Inquisitor.	6-7 Favour
Converting a world to the worship of the Daemon Prince's god; orchestrating a major daemonic incursion into reality.	8-9 Favour
Conquering a sector capitol in the name of Chaos; launching a Black Crusade; engineering the fall of a loyalist Space Marine Chapter to Chaos.	10+ Favour

Daemon Prince of Khorne

Daemon Princes of Khorne are likely to gain Favour from acts of violence and bloodshed of all kinds. However, the scale should be appropriate for a Daemon Prince. Killing a single opponent is unlikely to be worth any Favour, unless it is a particularly powerful one, but smashing apart squads of enemies and ripping the heart from an opposing army could be worth anywhere from 1-5 Favour, at the GM's discretion. In general, Daemon Princes of Khorne can gain Favour on the battlefield, both for personal deeds and for leading armies of Khorne's followers to glorious slaughter and death. Often, it does not matter to Khorne who wins or loses, as long as great amounts of blood are spilled. Even a battle that the forces of Chaos lose could garner Favour for a Daemon Prince of Khorne who served his god well (1d5-1 Favour might be appropriate).

Daemon Prince of Nurgle

Nurgle takes great delight in the actions of his Daemon Princes. Like a thoughtful parent, the God of Decay grants rewards—and punishments—where deserved. Spreading pestilence and disease are amongst the primary methods by which a Daemon Prince of Nurgle accrues Favour. The activities must be suitably impressive for such a mighty being as a Daemon Prince in order to be worthy of Favour. Infecting a single individual with a disease is probably not worth Favour, unless the highly infectious contagion goes on to spread from that individual and infect an entire hive city. Bringing mortals into Papa Nurgle's embrace in such a manner is worth an amount of favour based on the scale of the epidemic, the ingenuity of its inception, and the severity of its outcome. For instance, a plague that ravages an entire planet, leaving it a dead world of rotting biological matter from which new life can spring, might be worth 5 Favour or more.

Daemon Prince of Slaanesh

Contrary to Daemons of Khorne, who win their god's Favour on the battlefield, Daemon Princes of Slaanesh are well-suited to corrupting mortals, seducing them with the lure of Chaos and all that the Dark Prince offers. Weak-willed mortals are likely to fall under a Slaanesh Daemon Prince's spell on sight, and so are unlikely to be worth any Favour, but corrupting powerful Imperial officials and warriors could garner several points of Favour. In addition, deeds of excess can gain Slaanesh's approval. Erecting great vox-cathedrals in worship of Slaanesh, instigating mass sacrifices, and other acts of extreme worship and debauchery grant up to 5 Favour.

Daemon Prince of Tzeentch

Plots, conspiracies, and unchecked mutation are the meat and drink of Daemon Princes of Tzeentch. Schemes and machinations are ends in themselves for the Changer of the Ways, for simply engaging in such activities furthers Tzeentch's ends. The more grandiose and complex the plot, and the more individuals it ensnares, both mortal and Daemonic, the greater the Favour it earns. Similarly, any actions that allow the Warp to spill into reality could be worthy of Favour in the eyes of Tzeentch. Rituals leading to mass mutations, arranging for a Warp Storm to encompass a world or system, and granting profane knowledge to mortal servants are all potential sources of Favour.

Favour From Compacts

Daemon Princes can continue to participate in Compacts, more than likely as the instigator or the Anointed. However, as such potent beings, Daemon Princes are unlikely to take place in Compacts of a smaller scope than an Enterprise. If they do, the GM might choose to reduce the Infamy reward for the Daemon Prince character (but not for the other participants, who might even receive additional Infamy for keeping such illustrious company).

For Compacts of appropriate scale for a Daemon Prince, the GM can award Favour in addition to Infamy, if the Compact serves the interests of the Daemon's patron god. Depending on how much Favour the Daemon Prince gains during the course of the Compact, the GM might also award Favour equal to half of the Infamy gained upon successful completion of the Compact. At the GM's discretion, he can reduce the Infamy award by an amount equal to the Favour award, illustrating the fact that a Daemon Prince's actions must be comparatively grander than his mortal compatriots in order to impress the gods and mortal servants of Chaos.

Losing Favour

As leaders of both Daemonic legions and mortal armies, Daemon Princes have the eye of their god more so than almost any mortal servant. And although Daemon Princes command unimaginable power, they must nonetheless ever seek to serve their patron's interests and avoid his displeasure. A Daemon Prince who fails his patron deity or acts against its wishes incurs his god's wrath. In the most extreme cases, this might result in the Daemon Prince being banished back to the Warp for a time, or cast adrift on the seas of the Empyrean. More commonly, it results in the Chaos God stripping a small portion of power from the Daemon Prince, whether as punishment or simply as a by-product of the loss of esteem.

TABLE 3-2: LOSS OF FAVOUR

Failure in the Eyes of One's Patron	Loss
Assisting a Daemon of a rival god in a venture that does not also benefit the Daemon Prince's patron; failing to seize an opportunity to further the patron god's interests.	1-2 Favour
Failing in an undertaking in the patron god's name; being defeated by a Daemon of a rival god; being summoned (against one's will) or otherwise overpowered by a mortal.	3-4 Favour
Actions that directly interfere with or contradict the tenets of his Patron God, such as a Daemon Prince of Khorne declining a martial challenge or a Daemon Prince of Tzeentch giving a completely honest answer to a question.	5+ Favour

Using Favour

Although even the most strong-willed of mortals can exert only a minuscule amount of control over the mutating effects of the Warp on their flesh, Daemon Princes are entities of pure Chaos. While mortal supplicants of the Dark Powers have little power over how their growing corruption manifests in mutations and other blessings of Chaos, a Daemon Prince can channel the power of the Warp and the Favour of his god as he sees fit.

A Daemon Prince may "spend" Favour in order to obtain Daemonic Gifts. To do so, the player selects a Daemonic Gift and pays the corresponding Favour cost, reducing his current Favour by that amount. For a list of Daemonic Gifts, their cost in Favour, and a description of their effects, see page 70.

Generally, players should spend Favour in this way during downtime or at the end of a session. The circumstances under which a Daemon Prince gains a new Daemonic Gift depend on the nature of a Daemon Prince and the Daemonic Gift in question. The GM and player should work together to come up with a suitable explanation. The Daemon Prince might be summoned to appear before his god and receive a benediction, stepping through a tear in reality and reappearing hours or days later with new abilities, or he might exert great focus, bending the Warp and reality to his will to enact instantaneous changes.

Dismissing Gifts

A Daemon Prince can choose to dismiss a Daemonic Gift at any time (although it is usually best done during the downtime between sessions). When he does so, he loses all benefits of the gift, including Traits, Talents, or Skills it bestows. The Daemon Prince does not recoup the Favour cost of the Daemonic Gift; the price has already been paid. A Daemon Prince can dismiss Gifts of the Gods in the same manner (although he only receives Favour for doing so at the time of Apotheosis, as described on page 65).

DAEMON PRINCES IN BLACK CRUSADE

Becoming a Daemon Prince is a fundamental change to any Heretic, propelling him to a new tier of power and influence. Daemon Princes are apocalyptically powerful, and enemies and encounters that could challenge even the mightiest Chaos Space Marines are unlikely to slow a Daemon Prince. Daemon Princes also change the dynamics of a game outside of combat, perhaps even more so. Even in the worlds of the Screaming Vortex, a Daemon Prince is a rare and terrible sight. Where a Chaos Space Marine or severely mutated Heretic might raise eyebrows, the presence of a Daemon Prince causes others to flee in terror or fall to their knees in reverence. As a result, a warband that includes a Daemon Prince is certain to have a decidedly different experience. And while many challenges disappear in the face of a Daemon Prince, new obstacles replace them.

PLAYING A DAEMON PRINCE

A Daemon Prince is unlike any other character a player might control in Black Crusade. Even the most horrendously mutated Chaos Space Marine is still a creature of flesh and blood. On some level, such a being is mortal. Not so, a Daemon Prince. Daemon Princes are entities of the Warp, immortal and ephemeral. Just as their bodies have transcended the limits of flesh and bone, so have their minds passed beyond mortal reckoning. Although a Daemon Prince might possess many of the convictions and desires that it did in mortal life, its perception and experience of the material universe—and that which lies beyond—are forever changed. However, the echoes of their previous selves hold strong sway over a Daemon Prince, at least at first. Some Daemon Princes continue to pursue the goals they had in mortal life, long after forgetting their original motivations.

Daemon Princes and Other Heretics

Daemon Princes pose certain challenges for players and the GM as part of a group of Heretics. Daemon Princes are mighty entities and, even in the Screaming Vortex, likely to inspire terror or worship (or both) wherever their dreadful footsteps fall. There are times when a Daemon Prince might simply not be able to go where other Heretics can, or to do so might undermine the group's very intentions. When subtlety is called for, a Daemon Prince is problematic.

Daemon Princes might not always be able to accompany the other Heretics. This could be for reasons of discretion as described above. When this happens, the GM should try to keep the Daemon Prince involved through telepathic communication or some other method. However, players might have to accept that such instances are just the price to pay for having such a powerful and extraordinary character. These cases also serve as a reminder that the “ordinary” Heretics still have a purpose and certain advantages over the Daemon Prince. It can be easy for the other players to feel that the Daemon Prince overshadows their characters, due to its prestige and numerous abilities. Making the Daemon Prince's limitations and drawbacks a part of the ongoing narrative is one way the GM can ensure the other Heretics have a chance to shine.

The Great Game

Daemon Princes must constantly be aware of their status in the eyes of their patron. This is reflected mechanically in the Favour rules, but should also be incorporated in roleplaying. A Daemon Prince is a leader of his god's Daemonic forces, and has a high visibility. As well as the advantages that come with greater power, this has the disadvantage of his god being more likely to notice and respond to any failings on the Heretic's part. The GM and player should keep this in mind, using it both to drive roleplaying and create plot hooks.

BANISHMENT

As beings of the Warp, Daemon Princes cannot be truly killed like flesh-and-blood mortals. However, like any Daemon, a Daemon Prince can be banished, cast back into the depths of the Warp until such time as it gathers enough power to again manifest in the material universe.

When a Daemon Prince suffers Critical Damage resulting in death, suffers Damage in excess of his Wounds as a result of Warp Instability, or is otherwise “killed,” he does not die but is banished back to the Warp. A Daemon Prince can sacrifice Infamy to avoid this fate, in much the same way as other Heretics can to avoid death.

When a Daemon Prince is “killed,” the player can choose to permanently decrease his Infamy by $10+2d10$. If he does so, the Daemon Prince is banished, but only for a short time. The Daemon Prince is effectively powerless for the remainder of the session, while it gathers its strength, and can take no further part in combat encounters or similar scenes. At the GM's discretion, the Daemon Prince might be able to communicate with the other Heretics and with NPCs, appearing to them in dreams or visions, speaking through a medium or Daemonic emissary, or through other, even more esoteric, means. The Daemon Prince cannot be banished again or otherwise harmed for the remainder of the session. After the session (or at the beginning of the next session, depending on the needs of the campaign), the Daemon Prince claws its way back into reality. It is up to the players and GM to determine how this comes about, but it should be a suitably remarkable event—possessing a rogue psyker, having its servants or allies orchestrate a great ritual to summon it, or some other appropriate event.

Alternatively, the player can choose to reduce his character's Infamy by $5+2d10$. With this option, the Daemon Prince remains in reality and is restored to 1 Wound, removing all Critical Damage. It can continue to take part in combat encounters and other scenes, but this also means it can be “killed” again, requiring a further sacrifice of Infamy.

Regardless of which option he chooses, a Daemon Prince that sacrifices Infamy in order to avoid banishment also loses an equal amount of Favour. If this reduces his Favour to 0 (or if it is already 0), the Daemon Prince also loses one randomly determined Daemonic Gift.

If a Daemon Prince does not have sufficient Infamy to sacrifice (the loss of Infamy would reduce its Infamy to 0), or chooses not to, it is banished to the Warp for an interminable period. Although not truly dead, the Daemon Prince has so failed its god, or lost so much power, that it cannot again manifest in realspace for centuries, millennia, or longer. While time has little meaning in the Warp, for purposes of the game, the Daemon Prince is assumed to be banished for a long enough period that it plays no further part in the current campaign.

DARK ENDOWMENT

"The very fire of Chaos flows in my veins. Nothing can stop me now!"

—Ar'xok the Bitter, Dark Apostle

To exist as a Daemon Prince is to live as a mortal made something more, and to embody the dark machinations of the Chaos Gods. The few infamous enough to rise to this rank have been given the Dark Gods' ultimate gift, and the rewards for such service are great. This section covers Daemonic Gifts, powerful new abilities available only to Daemon Princes. Each Daemonic Gift can only be selected once unless noted.

UNALIGNED GIFTS

All Daemon Princes swear loyalty to one of the Dark Gods of Chaos yet even the most diametrically opposed Princes might exhibit similar characteristics. Dark auras, Daemonic weapons, and great sweeping wings appear on many Daemon Princes, no matter which ruinous master the individual serves.

Any Daemon Prince can choose Unaligned Gifts.

ARMOUR OF CHAOS

The Daemon Prince's armour glows with unholy power, contorting to take a form no mortal could ever hope to wear.

The Daemon Prince gains 12 Armour Points on all locations (replacing existing armour). The armour gains additional properties based on the Prince's alignment (see **Upgrades** on pages 177–178 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook):

Khorne: Vicious spikes grow from the armour. The armour gains the Spikes Upgrade.

Slaanesh: The armour gleams and reflects incoming light. The armour gains the Refractory Upgrade.

Nurgle: Dishevelled and cracked, the armour falls away when damaged only to scab over and heal itself after festering for a time. The armour gains the Ablative Upgrade. This Ablative armour repairs automatically at the start of each game session.

Tzeentch: The armour changes of its own accord to better protect the wearer. The armour gains the Ceramite, Insulated, and Thermal Upgrades.

DAEMONIC AURA

A crackling glow surrounds the Daemon Prince, absorbing or turning aside even the mightiest blows.

The Daemon Prince gains a Force Field with a Protection Rating of 30 that never Overloads (see page 178 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook).

DAEMONIC FLIGHT

Two massive wings burst from the Daemon Prince's back.

The Daemon Prince gains the Flyer (X) Trait, where X equals twice the Prince's Agility Bonus. Wings take forms dependant upon the Prince's patron, such as feathered wings for Tzeentch, or the wings of a fly for Nurgle, but are all functionally identical.

TABLE 3-3: DAEMONIC GIFTS

Unaligned Daemonic Gifts

Gift	Cost
Armour of Chaos	12
Daemonic Aura	15
Daemonic Flight	10
Daemonic Rune	15
Daemon Weapon	20
Immortal Power	10

Khornate Daemonic Gifts

Gift	Cost
Adorned in Brass	15
Hellfire Gaze	15
Khorne's Favour	16
Lord of War	20
Obsidian Star	15

Slaaneshi Daemonic Gifts

Gift	Cost
Ecstatic Devotion	6
Lord of Vivacity	12
Siren's Call	18
Slaanesh's Favour	12
Soul Shrive	15

DAEMONIC RUNE

The Daemon Prince bares an unholy rune of immense power that acts as a tether and sustains his form in the mortal realm.

Once per session, the Daemon Prince may spend an Infamy Point as a Free Action to completely negate one hit that would be inflicted on him.

DAEMON WEAPON

The Gods of Chaos grant the Daemon Prince a rare prize: a mighty Daemon Weapon!

The Daemon Prince generates a Daemon Weapon based on a weapon in his possession and bound with a Daemon of his choice (see pages 194–202 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). The chosen type of Daemon must be either Unaligned or Aligned with the same Chaos God as the Daemon Prince, and the Prince must have an Infamy of 70+ in order to select a Greater Daemon. Alternatively, the Daemon Prince can select a pre-existing Daemon Weapon (with the GM's permission).

IMMORTAL POWER

The Daemon Prince channels the energy of the Warp, enhancing his already unnatural abilities.

The Daemon Prince selects one of the following Traits: Brutal Charge (X), Burrower (X), Crawler, Regeneration (X), Sturdy, Unnatural Characteristic (X), Unnatural Senses (X). The cost in Favour is 10 for a Trait without an X value, and the cost for a Trait with an X value is the value of X the Daemon Prince desires multiplied by 10 (e.g. Unnatural Agility (6) would cost 60 Favour). A Daemon Prince can select this Gift multiple times, but cannot choose the same Trait more than once and cannot choose a Trait he already possesses this way.

KHORNATE GIFTS

The following Gifts are for Daemon Princes Aligned to Khorne.

ADORNED IN BRASS

Khorne grants his favoured servant a suit of gleaming brass armour etched with symbols of power.

The Daemon Prince gains 8 Armour Points on his Arms/Legs/Head and 16 Armour Points on his Torso (replacing existing armour). The armour grants a +10 bonus to Tests to resist Psychic Powers as well as the Horns Armour Customisation (see page 176 **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook).

HELLFIRE GAZE

The Daemon Prince channels his rage and hatred into a searing lance of crimson Warfire.

The Daemon Prince gains a weapon with the listed profile (see page 73). Hellfire Gaze never Jams, cannot be Disarmed or destroyed, and requires no hands to use.

KHORNE'S FAVOUR

The Daemon Prince receives a lesser boon of Khorne that, whilst still powerful, acts as a reminder that neither mortal nor Daemon stands above the Blood God himself.

The Daemon Prince selects a single Reward of Khorne (see page 301–302 **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) from the following list: Collar of Khorne, Daemonic Name, Face of Khorne, Flesh-Fused Weapon, Hand of Khorne, Purity of Aggression. He can select this Gift multiple times, but cannot choose a Reward he already possesses.

LORD OF WAR

Infused with Khorne's rage, the Daemon Prince embraces his role as an avatar of the Blood God.

The Daemon Prince selects a number of Talents equal to his current Weapon Skill Bonus from the following list: Battle Rage, Berserk Charge, Blood God's Contempt, Combat Master, Crushing Blow, Flesh Render, Furious Assault, Killing Strike, Thunder Charge, Whirlwind of Death. Additionally, the Daemon Prince cannot use the Disengage Action.

OBSIDIAN STAR

Many Khornate Champions bear the Collar of Khorne, but it is a symbol of servitude; an adornment fit for a pet, not a loyal vassal who has proven his ferocity time and time again in blood. Entrusted only to the most dedicated Daemon Princes, the Obsidian Star protects its wearer against the cowardice of psykers far more than any slave's collar.

Psykers within 64 metres of the Daemon Prince halve their Psy-Rating (to a minimum of 1) and Force Weapons lose the Force Quality. Additionally, any character Aligned to Khorne within 64 metres of the Daemon Prince (including the Daemon Prince himself) gains a +40 bonus to resisting Psychic Powers.

SLAANESHI GIFTS

The following Gifts are for Daemon Princes Aligned to Slaanesh.

ECSTATIC DEVOTION

The Daemon Prince's mere presence fills his followers with waves of delight. They hang on his every word, willing to do his bidding with no concern for life or limb.

The Daemon Prince gains the Unholy Devotion Talent and doubles the number of Minions he can have. Additionally, he may take Minions aligned to another Chaos God, although these minions ignore the Unholy Devotion Talent and suffer a –10 penalty to Loyalty Tests.

LORD OF VIVACITY

Drowning in excess, the Daemon Prince gains speed as he seeks the next euphoric extreme.

The Daemon Prince selects a number of Talents equal to his current Agility Bonus from the following list: Assassin's Strike, Catfall, Crippling Strike, Hard Target, Leap Up, Lightning Reflexes, Preternatural Speed, Radiant Presence, Rapid Reaction, Sprint. Additionally, during combat encounters, the Daemon Prince cannot use the same Full Action or pair of Half Actions that he used during the previous Round.

SIREN'S CALL

The Daemon Prince's voice takes on such a soothing tone that even the most vengeful adversaries stand utterly incapable of attacking such a majestic creature.

The Daemon Prince gains a +40 bonus to Charm Tests. As a Full Action, he may call to a single adversary in line of sight. If the target fails an **Opposed Charm vs. Willpower Test**, it loses the ability to target the Daemon Prince with any attacks for a number of Rounds equal to the Degrees of Failure by which it lost the Test. The target can apply any bonuses to this Opposed Test that would apply to resisting a psychic attack against it.

SLAANESH'S FAVOUR

The Daemon Prince receives a lesser boon of Slaanesh that, whilst stimulating, provides only a hint of the true delicacies the Pleasure God provides.

The Daemon Prince selects a single Reward of Slaanesh (see pages 299–300 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) from the following list: Daemonic Name, Face of Slaanesh, Hermaphrodite, One Thousand and One Senses. He can select this Gift multiple times, but cannot choose a Reward he already possesses.

SOUL SHRIVE

To a Daemon, nothing tastes as sweet as the soul of a mortal, and the power to simply pluck the living essence from an unwitting victim is one of Slaanesh's greatest gifts.

The Daemon Prince gains a weapon with the listed profile (see page 73). Soul Shrive never Jams, cannot be Disarmed or destroyed, and requires no hands to use.

NURGLESQUE GIFTS

The following Gifts are for Daemon Princes Aligned to Nurgle.

DEATH'S HAND

One of the Daemon Prince's hands swells and drips with all manner of fetid liquids, gases, and slimes.

The Daemon Prince gains a weapon with the listed profile (see page 73). Death's Hand cannot be Disarmed or destroyed, and does not prevent the hand from performing other tasks. The Daemon Prince chooses which hand gains this Gift.

LORD OF DECAY

Mutated and twisted almost beyond recognition, the Daemon Prince sunders everything in his wake.

The Daemon Prince selects a number of Talents/Traits equal to his current Toughness Bonus (including Unnatural Toughness, but not bonuses from the Daemonic Trait) from the following list: Baleful Dirge, Corpus Conversion†, Disturbing Voice, Fear (+1), Hardy, Size (+1), Sound Constitution††, True Grit. Additionally, the Daemon Prince cannot use the Run Action.

†Although they are not human, Nurgle Daemon Princes practice sorcery that allows this ritual to function.

††The Daemon Prince may select this Talent up to 3 times, each time counting towards his maximum number of chosen Talents/Traits.

TABLE 3-4: DAEMONIC GIFTS (CONT)

Nurglesque Daemonic Gifts

Gift	Cost
Death's Hand	5
Lord of Decay	15
Noxious Touch	7
Nurgle's Favour	14
Unbreakable	20

Tzeentchian Daemonic Gifts

Gift	Cost
Arcane Wisdom	30
Lord of Lies	20
Spectral Blade	20
Tzeentch's Favour	9
Warpfire Nimbus	25

NOXIOUS TOUCH

Riddled with nauseating diseases, touching the Daemon Prince's skin causes instant infections.

The Daemon Prince gains the Toxic (4) Trait and his unarmed attacks gain the Corrosive, Toxic (4), and Irradiated (4) Qualities.

NURGLE'S FAVOUR

The Daemon Prince receives a lesser boon of Nurgle that, whilst putrid, provides only a hint of the joyous putrefaction the Plague God provides.

The Daemon Prince selects a single Reward of Nurgle (See pages 300–301 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) from the following list: Corpulent Immensity, Daemonic Name, Face of Nurgle, Nurgle's Rot, Nurgling Infestation. He can select this Gift multiple times, but cannot choose a Reward he already possesses.

UNBREAKABLE

Swelling to massive proportions, the Daemon Prince transforms into a mountain of rotting flesh.

The Daemon Prince increases his Size by 1, gains 14 Armour Points on all locations (replacing existing armour), the Regeneration (7) Trait, and ignores Difficult Terrain when moving. He reduces his Agility by 40 (to a minimum of 7), and cannot make Evasion Tests. A Daemon Prince with this Gift cannot use or benefit from Daemonic Flight or the Unnatural Agility Trait.

TZEENTCHIAN GIFTS

The following Gifts are for Daemon Princes Aligned to Tzeentch.

ARCANE WISDOM

The unlimited knowledge of Chaos floods the Daemon Prince's mind, granting him knowledge beyond his ken and beyond his control.

The Daemon Prince gains Rank 3 in every Common Lore, Forbidden Lore, and Scholastic Lore Skill. Once per session, he may expend an Infamy Point to automatically pass any single Lore Test with 9 Degrees of Success. Each time he uses a Lore Skill roll 1d10. On a result of 9, he cannot use that Skill until the end of the session. Lore Skills already higher than Rank 3 remain at their current Rank.

LORD OF LIES

By focusing his energy, the Daemon Prince forcibly alters his appearance to that of a normal human. The effects are fleeting, but such subterfuge opens up many paths to deception.

Once per session, the Daemon Prince can take the form of a regular human (age, gender, and physical attributes chosen by the player). The effect lasts a number of hours equal to his Intelligence Bonus, or until he uses any of his Rewards or Daemonic Gifts, or if any character detects the Daemon Prince through an **Arduous Hard (–40) Psyniscience Test**.

SPECTRAL BLADE

Tzeentch gifts the Daemon Prince with the ability to conjure a blade of pure psychic energy.

The Daemon Prince gains a weapon with the listed profile (see below). Once per Round, he may conjure the Spectral Blade as a Free Action (choosing in which of his hands it appears). He cannot have more than one Spectral Blade conjured at a time.

TZEENTCH'S FAVOUR

The Daemon Prince receives a lesser boon of Tzeentch that provides the smallest hint of the Architect of Fate's grand plan.

The Daemon Prince selects a single Reward of Tzeentch (see pages 302–303 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) from the following list: Daemonic Name, Face of Tzeentch, Flaming Arm, Massive Intellect, Warpsmith. He can select this Gift multiple times, but cannot choose a Reward he already possesses. Each time the Daemon Prince selects this Gift, roll 1d10. On a result of 9, the Daemon Prince gains the Ecstatic Duplication Reward (see page 303) instead. Such is the fickle favour of Tzeentch!

WARPFIRE NIMBUS

A shining vortex of multicoloured fire whips around the Daemon Prince, protecting him from harm.

The Daemon Prince gains a Force Field with a Protection Rating equal to his current level of Favour (to a minimum of 9). Recalculate the Protection Rating as the Daemon Prince spends and receives Favour. The Field Overloads on any result that is a multiple of 9 (so 9, 18, 27, and so on). While this blazing nimbus surrounds him, the Daemon Prince's unarmed attacks gain the Flame Quality, but he automatically fails all Stealth Tests with 1d5 Degrees of Failure.



TABLE 3-5: DAEMONIC GIFT WEAPON PROFILES

NAME	CLASS	RANGE	RoF	DAMAGE	PEN	SPECIAL
Hellfire Gaze†	Heavy	20m	S/–/–	2d10+16 X	8	Felling (4), Flame, Melta, Proven (4), Recharge
Soul Shrive†	Heavy	30m	S/–/–	3d10 E	0	Shocking, Tearing, Warp Weapon
Death's Hand†	Melee	–	–	1d10+7 I	0	Decay (7) (see page 42)
Spectral Blade†	Melee	–	–	1d10+9 R	9	Balanced, Force

† These weapons never run out of ammunition and have an unlimited Clip Size (if applicable). A Daemon Prince gifted with one of these weapons is always considered trained in its use, and does not suffer a penalty for wielding it untrained.



LAUNCHING A BLACK CRUSADE

"Let the galaxy burn."

—Attributed to Warmaster Horus

The **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook introduces the possibility of running a massive war effort against the Imperium as a suitable ending to a campaign for high-Infamy Heretics. Although such a war can be handled narratively through the rules already present in the game, some groups may want a more detailed way of tracking their armies and fleets as they tear down whole sectors in their very own Black Crusade. The rules in this section are designed to provide exactly that, from the gathering of a full invasion force to razing and corruption of Imperial worlds.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN APOCALYPSE

A Heretic's steps on the path to glory are inevitably shaped by their attitude towards the Chaos Gods, and especially their patron (or lack thereof). This is as true when their footsteps shake the galaxy as it was when they first set out in service of the Ruinous Powers. A Warmaster serving Khorne does so by bringing about a Black Crusade that drowns the galaxy in the blood of open war, while one serving Tzeentch advances his

forces according to an inscrutable agenda that can no more be opposed than it can be understood. Each of the Chaos powers directs their servants towards a unique path of conquest fitted to the particular gifts and stratagems they favour. No less deadly are the campaigns plotted by the Unaligned, for anyone who can claim the title of Warmaster without a Dark God's backing must be a power in their own right.

DEDICATING THE CRUSADE

Much like a Compact, a Black Crusade can be dedicated to one of the four Chaos Gods. However, the Dark Gods are jealously protective of the work of their champions. As such, a Black Crusade can only be dedicated to the Chaos God to which the Warmaster (if it has one leader) or the majority of the Heretics (if they share leadership) are Aligned. If the Warmaster is Unaligned or the Heretics do not have a common Alignment across the majority of their group, then the Black Crusade cannot be dedicated to a specific god. A Black Crusade need not be dedicated to one god in particular, but an Aligned Warmaster risks slighting his dark patron by failing to glorify it through his dread works.

Dedicating a Black Crusade to a specific god grants certain benefits and applies certain penalties to the war effort itself, as described below. As a dedicated Black Crusade relies heavily on certain strategies, the Warmaster must meet certain minimum requirements when assembling his troops in order to successfully dedicate the Black Crusade (details can be found on page 75, and in **The Dread Host Gathers** on page 76). A Black Crusade that has not been dedicated to a specific Dark God receives no special bonuses, penalties, or requirements.

THE WARMASTER'S ASCENSION

The issue of power is always a concern in games of **BLACK CRUSADE**, as the cut-throat nature of a Heretic's world leads to concerns of betrayal and self-advancement. This is never more true when dealing with the ultimate position of power in the material universe—that of the Warmaster. If one character in the group has significantly more Infamy than the other PCs (such as being ahead by 15 or more points of Infamy), it can be appropriate to grant that Heretic the title of Warmaster. Playing the Warmaster in a Black Crusade should be treated as a position similar to being the Anointed in charge of a Compact—the first among equals, but not the master of the entire enterprise. Groups that enjoy inter-character drama can to play up the tension between the expectations of the hordes serving the Warmaster and those of his fellow Heretics who expect a share in the glory, but the players should always keep the interests of the group and good fun in mind. If the current Warmaster dies, another Heretic can rally the troops and take over by making a **Very Hard (–30) Infamy Test** (or an **Opposed Infamy Test** against any NPC trying to steal control of it); otherwise, the Black Crusade collapses and scatters or rallies behind another figure.

Matters may be simpler if all the PCs in the group reach the threshold to lead a Black Crusade at roughly the same time. Even if not all of them actually pass the dividing line, if they are within reach of those who have done so, they can join in the enterprise as equal leaders. Such a group—a council of mighty Warmasters—is exceedingly rare, and thus all the more dangerous.

Of course, whether playing as a single Warmaster and his lieutenants or as a council of mighty leaders, the players are under no obligation to stick to a single title. The term “Warmaster” is used throughout this section to refer to the leader or governing group of a Black Crusade, but the players can have their characters claim whatever title they like, from Annihilatrix to Dread Cabal. After all, who is going to forbid them from taking whatever name they like?

Tide of Blood (Khorne)

A Black Crusade dedicated to Khorne is a brutal campaign of slaughter across countless worlds, leaving little behind but gore-soaked soil and mountains of piled skulls. The Warmaster's forces reduce Defender Strength by an additional 10 points after succeeding on an **Opposed Conflict Value Test** due to the brutal efficiency of the Blood God's warriors. However, when a Lieutenant betrays the Warmaster in the Treachery and Discontent step of Crusade Turn, an additional Host is lost to internecine conflict.

To lead a Black Crusade dedicated to Khorne, the Warmaster must command at least six Hosts and at least three Landing Fleets.

Campaign of Subversion (Slaanesh)

A Black Crusade dedicated to Slaanesh barely resembles a traditional war at all. Although planets fall before the invading presence of the Warmaster's hosts, they do so thanks to the subversive influence of cultist networks and the allure of witch-spoken words rather than marching armies and fired bombardments. The Warmaster gains +10 to **Corruption Tests** made to Corrupt Territories due to the ease with which his subversive influence converts the general populace. However, he loses an additional Host whenever an **Opposed Conflict Value Test** results in a die roll of doubles, as prolonged conflicts grind away at the enthusiasm of the Dark Prince's fickle servants.

In order to lead a Black Crusade dedicated to Slaanesh, the Warmaster must command at least three Cults within Imperial space, as well as some asset appropriate to rapid assault and deployment (either three or more Landing Fleets or a unique advantage such as access to Eldar webway routes. See **Adjudicating Unique Forces** on page 77).

Advance the Inevitable (Tzeentch)

A Black Crusade dedicated to Tzeentch appears to pick its targets at random, as the Architect of Fate allows his champions to strike not only at current strongholds of his enemies, but at their futures as well. Seemingly insignificant targets become

lynchpins in a battle plan spanning time as well as space. During each Crusade Turn, the Warmaster may select one Territory being fought over and grant his forces there +20 to one Test of any kind. However, the Warmaster finds his plans being manipulated in turn for Tzeentch's inscrutable ends. In any Crusade Turn in which the Warmaster takes advantage of this bonus, the GM may select one Territory being fought over and cause the Warmaster's forces to suffer -10 to one Test of any kind, as the Great Manipulator advances another agenda.

In order to lead a Black Crusade dedicated to Tzeentch, the Warmaster must command at least one Cabal, which must be dedicated to divining the will of Tzeentch and cannot be deployed to assist in Territories on the Crusade Map. In addition, the Warmaster must command at least three Fleets so he is able to swiftly redeploy his strength according to the needs of the ever-shifting future.

Triumph of Decay (Nurgle)

A Black Crusade dedicated to Nurgle fights not only with weapons and armies, but with one of the most basic principles of the universe—entropy. The vanguard of such a war effort is not soldiers or ships, but plague, despair, and decay. The warhosts of Nurgle play the long game in battle, knowing that all things crumble in time. With a little help from plagueships, and some judicious sabotage, the enemies of the Fly Lord starve in their fortresses as they find their supply lines become a vector for new corruption. Forces opposing the Black Crusade suffer -1 to rolls on **Table 3–7: Enemy Reinforcements** (see page 84) each Crusade Turn. However, the Warmaster's forces suffer -10 to **Opposed Conflict Value Tests** during the first Crusade Turn fighting in a new Territory, as they have not yet had time to let their favoured weapons do their work.

In order to lead a Black Crusade dedicated to Nurgle, the Warmaster must command at least three Fleets, and possess some means of corrupting the Imperium's supply lines (either one or more Cults or Cabals dedicated to Nurgle, or a unique advantage such as Plague Cauldrons. See **Adjudicating Unique Forces** on page 77).



THE DREAD HOST GATHERS

Although the favour of the gods is important to a Black Crusade, no Warmaster can hope to do battle in the material realm without armies and fleets. The Heretics might have been able to assemble such resources over the campaign, or they might need to call in debts and leverage their reputations to gather them. Even if the Warmaster already commands armies and fleets thanks to the Heretics' previous adventures, it is possible to bolster his Black Crusade further before its onset.

Forces for a Black Crusade are handled abstractly. For example, planetary battles are won using Hosts, which can represent anything from warbands of Traitor Legionnaires or regiments of renegade Imperial Guard to teeming hordes of barbarians from a world such as Xurunt in the Screaming Vortex. Guidelines on acquiring these abstracted forces (collectively referred to as Crusade Forces) are presented below, whether in terms of representing existing assets or acquiring them through aggressive recruitment for the Black Crusade.

Fleets and Landing Fleets

Fleets are used for one of two purposes—to wage Naval Conflicts and to deploy forces to new Territories. A given Fleet can carry up to three Hosts between Territories. The nature of the particular host does not matter, as elite forces demand accommodations in transport that make them as difficult to move as packed-in lesser warriors. Some Fleets are designated as Landing Fleets. Landing Fleets are less effective in Naval Conflicts due to limited armament, but each grant +5 to the **Opposed Conflict Value Test** in a Territory where they are present for the Resolve Conflicts phase, thanks to the array of dropships and guidance systems that allow troops to deploy and redeploy across a planet's surface. Landing Fleets may be counted as normal Fleets for the purpose of meeting the requirements to dedicate a Black Crusade as described on page 75, and may carry up to three Hosts in the same manner as a normal Fleet.

Existing naval assets controlled by the Heretics can potentially grant them Fleets at the start of a Black Crusade. A Fleet typically consists of at least one powerful capital ship and a small number of frigates or destroyers to escort it. Landing Fleets have fewer warships and may lack capital ships entirely, but require bulk transport vessels to ferry troops and munitions. If the Heretics wish to gather additional Fleets to their cause, they must leverage their Infamy. For each Fleet or Landing Fleet added to their forces, one PC must burn 4 points of Infamy and succeed at a **Very Hard (–30) Infamy Test** (using the adjusted value). The Heretics may attempt this as many times as they like, so long as they have Infamy to burn.

Hosts

The meat and drink of a Black Crusade are the mighty warrior-hosts used to wage planetary war. They may be elite forces of Chaos Space Marines or ravening barbarian tribes, but they all share an appetite for blood and destruction. Hosts are crucial to the Resolve Conflicts step of the Crusade Turn, which represents the flow of battle across a world's surface.

Existing military assets controlled by the Heretics can potentially grant them Hosts at the start of a Black Crusade. Some particularly powerful assets may count as multiple Hosts. In general, a Host can be a few veteran squads of Traitor Legionnaires, several hundred disciplined and well-equipped soldiers such as renegade Guardsmen, or a thousands-strong rabble armed only with improvised weapons and unholy zeal. A small group of armoured fighting vehicles or even Daemon Engines could also count as a Host (although personnel carriers would be included in the ranks of another Host rather than counted on their own). As a general rule, the lower the quality of the troops, the more of them are needed to count as a Host. Similarly, elite forces such as warbands of Chaos Terminators can count as two or even three Hosts on their own. If the Heretics wish to gather additional Hosts to their cause, they must leverage their Infamy. For each Host added to their forces, one PC must burn 2 points of Infamy and succeed at a **Difficult (–10) Infamy Test** (using the adjusted value). The Heretics may attempt this as many times as they like, so long as they have Infamy to burn.

Cults

Cults within the Imperium can be used to weaken the defenders through sabotage and corruption. They prey on supply lines and weaken the resolve of planetary populations. Territories with a Cult deployed to them suffer a –10 penalty to **Opposed Conflict Value Tests**. In addition, attempts to Corrupt Territories with Cults deployed to them are easier, gaining +10 to the **Corruption Test** to do so. Cults can redeploy across the Crusade Map without using Fleets, as they co-opt the Imperium's own war machine to transport them where they need to go (although they are still restricted in redeployment rate in the same manner as other Crusade Forces). At the GM's discretion, one or more of the Cults under the Warmaster's command may begin the Black Crusade deployed to any of the Territories on the Crusade Map.

Any forces inside the Imperium under the PC's control at the start of a Black Crusade may be able to be counted as Cults. To count as a Cult, the force must be able to remain

hidden and act covertly, although it need not be a literal cult to the Dark Gods. Alpha Legion saboteurs could count as a Cult as easily as a network of decadent nobles serving the Ruinous Powers. In general, the Heretics should receive one Cult for every planet on which they have servants already operating. If the Heretics wish to gather additional Cults to their cause, they must leverage their Infamy. For each Cult added to their forces, one PC must burn 3 points of Infamy and succeed at a **Hard (-20) Infamy Test** (using the adjusted value). The Heretics may attempt this as many times as they like, so long as they have Infamy to burn.

Cabals

The strength at arms of a Warmaster's forces may be supplemented by the powers of the Warp if he has access to Cabals with which to call them down. Cabals are groups of sorcerers, wyrds, and ritualists who wield the power of Chaos to assist the battles of the Warmaster's Hosts. For every Cabal deployed to a Territory, the Warmaster may re-roll a single Test of any kind involving that Territory each Crusade Turn. Cabals can redeploy across the Crusade Map without using Fleets, as they call upon Warp portals and Daemonic servants to bring them where they are needed.

Any sorcerous assets controlled by the Heretics can potentially grant them Cabals at the start of a Black Crusade. A Cabal typically consists of several psykers trained to work in concert. This could be a powerful sorcerer and his enslaved thralls, a brood of mutant witches, or a cabal of self-taught wyrds. An especially powerful psyker or sorcerous ally could

count as a Cabal on their own. The assistance of powerful Daemons, especially Daemons of Tzeentch, might also count as one or more Cabals when they focus their attention on the mortal realm. If the Heretics wish to gather additional Cabals to their cause, they must leverage their Infamy. For each Cabal added to their forces, one PC must burn 4 points of Infamy and succeed at a **Very Hard (-30) Infamy Test** (using the adjusted value). The Heretics may attempt this as many times as they like, so long as they have Infamy to burn.

Lieutenants

While the Warmaster's will binds his forces together with a common goal, he cannot inspire, terrorise, and maintain discipline across every battlefield. For that, the Warmaster requires Lieutenants. Lieutenants are subordinate champions of Chaos who have sworn service to the Warmaster in exchange for a share of the plunder and the glory of his Black Crusade. Lieutenants are assigned to Territories being fought over, and grant bonuses to resolve conflicts in that Territory, as described in **Led Conflicts** on page 82. However, Hosts in a Territory overseen by a Lieutenant can sometimes be lost if the Lieutenant decides the Warmaster is not holding up his end of the deal, as described in **Treachery and Discontent** on page 84.

Any powerful NPC ally may potentially count as a Lieutenant at the start of a Black Crusade. Minions provided by the Greater Minion of Chaos Talent can count as Lieutenants at the GM's discretion, and Minions provided by the Superior Minion of Chaos Talent from **THE TOME OF EXCESS** should always count as Lieutenants unless there is some pressing reason why they could not lead a force (such as a Superior Minion that is a stealthy assassin). Additionally, powerful non-Minion NPCs who have sworn service to one or more of the Heretics could be counted as Lieutenants. If the Heretics wish to gather additional Lieutenants to their cause, they must leverage their Infamy. For each Lieutenant added to their forces, one PC must burn 5 points of Infamy and succeed at an **Arduous (-40) Infamy Test** (using the adjusted value). The Heretics may attempt this as many times as they like, so long as they have Infamy to burn.

ADJUDICATING UNIQUE FORCES

Some forces, allies, and unique assets gathered by the PCs over the course of a campaign can be difficult to categorise as Crusade Forces. The PCs may have access to unusual Daemonic pacts, xenos beasts, Chaos artefacts, or evens stranger things that work in unusual ways. Some of these assets can be used according to a "counts-as" principle. This means that even if the asset does not take a typical form, it could be counted as a Fleet, Host, Cult, Cabal, or Lieutenant. An archeotech thought-virus that induces worship of the Warmaster might be able to count as a Cult or even a Lieutenant in a Territory infected with it, for example. If the GM cannot determine what a given asset should count as, or does not feel comfortable twisting the definitions of Crusade Forces in this way, it may be necessary to develop unique rules for the asset. In general, a unique force should have an impact on the Black Crusade similar to the one it has had in the campaign up to that point. A powerful Daemon Engine that was crucial in previous events should be able to tip the scales in the Territory to which it is deployed, while a minor Daemon-slave might only be able to provide benefits every few Crusade Turns. Potential examples of unique benefits include granting bonuses to various sorts of Conflicts, generating Plunder Points, or allowing faster or safer transition for certain Crusade Forces across the Crusade Map.



LETTING THE GALAXY BURN

Even the greatest Warmasters cannot assault the whole of the Imperium at once. The crumbling edifices of the Corpse-Emperor sprawl across the entire galaxy, protected against total destruction as much by the vastness of space as by any efforts of their deluded guardians. Most Black Crusades begin as assaults against a single sector—even the infamous wars launched by Abaddon the Despoiler typically started by besieging the region of space known as the Cadian Gate.

In a PC-run Black Crusade, the Warmaster selects a region of the Imperium to assault, usually no larger than one sector (though ambitious warlords can attempt greater efforts). The region being assaulted must be one within reach of the Warmaster's forces, which typically means either the Calixis Sector, the Koronus Expanse, or the Jericho Reach for forces based in the Screaming Vortex. Unique artefacts of the Dark Gods, Daemonic pacts, or allies among the Dark Eldar might allow for more distant targets to be chosen.

Shadow War: The Calixis Sector

To the eyes of many among the Screaming Vortex's most ambitious leaders, the Calixis Sector is a fruit ripe for plucking. Its military resources are tied up between a distant war in the Jericho Reach and a civil war in the region now known as the Spinward Front. The Sector is the birthplace of an Imperial Saint, but has far fewer able defenders than its status might otherwise provide due its remote location and difficult current situation. However, the most canny warlords are also aware of two assets available to the Imperium in this region that could tip the balance of any conflict—the Calixian Conclave of Inquisitors and the Storm Wardens Chapter of the Adeptus Astartes. Neither force is suited to protracted warfare, especially with much of the Storm Wardens' strength on crusade in the Jericho Reach. However, Inquisitorial or Space Marine strike forces are capable of precisely targeted raids with devastating effects.

When running a Black Crusade in the Calixis Sector, Territories within the region should typically possess a low (25 to 30) Defender Strength due to the demands of the wars in the Jericho Reach and the Spinward Front. However, elite strike forces from Inquisitors and the Storm Wardens are a constant threat. Any Territory that receives reinforcements from the Enemy Reinforcements step at the end of a Crusade Turn gains +10 to **Opposed Conflict Value Tests** for the following Crusade Turn. Key Events in the Calixis Sector should be used frequently as attempts are made to assassinate the Heretics or counter the schemes they put into play. Key Events of this sort do not count towards the normal limit per Crusade Turn, and do not require PC input. The Heretics' success in such Key Events does not grant them the usual benefits, but instead prevents their efforts from being reversed (or their lives from being taken).

Possible Territories in the Calixis Sector include the Sector capital of Scintilla (Defender Strength 80), the major supply worlds of Iocanthos and Sepheris Secundus (Defender Strength 60), and the Storm Wardens home world of Sacris (Defender Strength 100, +20 to **Opposed Conflict Value Tests**, cannot be Corrupted). Additional Territories in the Calixis Sector can be invented by the GM or found within the **DARK HERESY** Core Rulebook and various **DARK HERESY** supplements.

The Dark Beyond: The Koronus Expanse

Those who pass for ambitious among the followers of the Corpse-Emperor see the Koronus Expanse as a priceless gem, but its value is considerably less to the followers of the Dark Gods. Where Rogue Traders and missionaries see the region's untapped worlds as a great bounty, most warlords in the Screaming Vortex are more interested in toppling empires and seizing plunder than claiming an uncontested prize. Still, thwarting the Imperium's expansion is a worthy goal, and the Expanse also hosts many xenos species known to provide excellent sport or whose death pleases the Ruinous Powers. Between Rogue Traders, Orks, Eldar, and the mysteries of the galactic halo, there are enough challenges in the Koronus Expanse to temper even a Black Crusade.

When running a Black Crusade in the Koronus Expanse, Territories in the region should possess a Defender Strength appropriate to their inhabitants, which may range from extremely high (worlds of the Ork-held Undred-Undred Teef) to the extremely low (planets housing human barbarians easily turned to the worship of Chaos). The extreme diversity of these inhabitants also may have unusual effects on Corrupting Territories. For example, the GM may allow for an increased chance to Corrupt barbaric worlds, while Ork-held Territories cannot be Corrupted in any sense meaningful to the Warmaster's efforts. In addition, the mysteries of the region make for unstable conditions, so the GM can roll twice on **Table 3–8: Map Events** (see page 85) and use the event of his choosing if those optional rules are being used.

Possible Territories in the Koronus Expanse include the assorted worlds of the Undred-Undred Teef (Defender Strength 80 to 100 each, +20 to **Opposed Conflict Value Tests**, cannot be Corrupted), the pirate stronghold of Iniquity (Defender Strength 90, automatically Corrupted), the apocalyptic wasteland of Zayth (Defender Strength 45), or the Rogue Trader-controlled port of Footfall (Defender Strength 80, Fleets deployed here also count as Hosts during the Resolve Conflicts phase). Additional Territories in the Koronus Expanse can be invented by the GM or found within the **ROGUE TRADER** Core Rulebook and various **ROGUE TRADER** supplements.

A Clash of Crusades: The Jericho Reach

By passing through the twisting passages of Warp-scarred space, it is possible to travel from the Screaming Vortex to the distant Jericho Reach and emerge in the Chaotic vortex of the Hadex Anomaly. Here, countless lives are lost attempting to reclaim the fallen might of the once-great Jericho Sector. The Imperium has deployed the mighty Achilus Crusade to retake the region, which some Warmasters might take as a challenge to match with a crusade of their own. Kill-teams of Deathwatch Space Marines, Tau colonists, and a swarming Tyranid Hive Fleet combine with the teeming ranks of the Imperial Guard and elite detachments from the Adeptus Astartes to make the Jericho Reach an almost impossible target—but the followers of Chaos know that the greater the opposition, the greater the glory there is to be had in conquest.



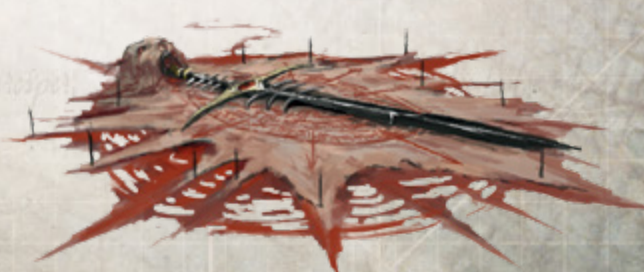
III: LORDS OF ENTROPY

When running a Black Crusade in the Jericho Reach, Territories in the region should possess high Defender Strengths (40 or more), as no force survives long in the Reach without fortifying its holdings. In addition, Tyranid- and Tau-held regions are difficult to Corrupt, due to the two species' unusual interactions with the Warp. Tests to Corrupt Territories held by the Tau or the Tyranids suffer -20. Successfully Corrupting a Tyranid-held Territory only yields 1 Plunder Point per Crusade Turn, as most such worlds are quickly stripped of resources and life. As a further complication, Deathwatch Kill-Teams have a chance to arrive whenever an Imperial-held Territory receives reinforcements in the Enemy Reinforcements step of the Crusade Turn. When this occurs, roll 1d10. A Kill-team arrives on a result of 8 or higher, granting +20 to **Opposed Conflict Value Tests** in that Territory during the following Crusade Turn.

Possible Territories in the Jericho Reach include the Imperial fortress world of Karlack (Defender Strength 90), the dark forge of Samech (Defender Strength 90, automatically Corrupted), the Tau enclave of Tsua'Malor (Defender Strength 90), and the redoubtable Watch-Fortress Erioch (Defender Strength 100, Fleets deployed here also count as Hosts during the Resolve Conflicts phase, +10 to **Opposed Naval Conflict Tests**, +20 to **Opposed Conflict Value Tests**, cannot be Corrupted). Additional Territories in the Jericho Reach can be invented by the GM or found within the **DEATHWATCH Core Rulebook** and various **DEATHWATCH** supplements.

Nowhere to Hide: Additional Targets

If the GM has detailed a new region of space not covered within any of the **WARHAMMER 40,000 ROLEPLAY** lines, this can also be targeted for conquest by a Black Crusade. In this case, the GM needs to go over the information he has for this sector or region and determine a few key factors. The military readiness of the region is a good indicator of the average Defender Strength of its Territories, although other factors such as the region's industrial capacity or the presence of notable Imperial Guard home worlds can modify this. The GM should also try and find ways to represent any unique "hooks" for the region tying in to its history or inhabitants, such as the Inquisitorial strike teams of the Calixis Sector or the numerous warring factions of the Jericho Reach. The previously listed regions can serve as inspiration in that regard. Finally, the GM needs to select the most important worlds within his region for use as Territories, and consider how their histories and populations might translate into Defender Strength and special advantages or disadvantages.



THE CRUSADE MAP

Once the Warmaster has chosen his target, the GM needs to prepare a Crusade Map for the targeted region. The Crusade Map allows players to direct their forces across the reaches of space and to track what worlds they have conquered and which still stand. The key components of a Crusade Map are the assorted Territories within a region and the Warp Routes connecting them.

Territories

Territories are the battlegrounds of the Black Crusade, where Imperial loyalists and followers of Chaos do battle for the fate of a world. A given Territory usually represents a single key world within the targeted region. At the GM's discretion, some Territories might represent whole systems connected by vast interplanetary traffic, or major space stations and installations. There do not need to be Territories for every single planet in the region (nor should there be, given how much time this would take to map and play through). Once the key worlds of a sector have fallen, the holdouts can be dealt with at the Warmaster's leisure.

For a small or low-population target, the Crusade Map should contain 4–6 Territories. For more populous regions such as the Calixis Sector or far-flung reaches of space such as the Koronus Expanse, 8–12 Territories is more typical. For a densely populated region of space with many key targets such as the Jericho Reach, or a multi-sector assault, 15 or more Territories might be in order. However, even if the Warmaster intends to carve a path across a whole Segmentum, the Crusade Map should not contain more than 25 or so Territories, as the greater number of Territories risks bogging down the game. In larger Black Crusades, the Territories fought over can be farther-flung and represent only the most key installations throughout the region.

This stage of planning also involves setting the Defender Strength of the Territories on the Crusade Map. Examples for doing so can be found on pages 78–79, although individual Territories can and should vary within a region depending on their nature and value to the Imperium. After all, the sector capital should not fall as easily as a mere agri-world, even one that feeds three sub-sectors. Particularly important or notable worlds might have unique properties to assign at this point as well, such as a sacred Shrine World that cannot be Corrupted. Of course, this only refers to its Corruption as a factor in the rules for the Black Crusade. Anything can fall to the power of Chaos with sufficient time and exposure, but some particularly persistent worlds may take more of both than is possible to provide while fighting an interstellar war of conquest.

Warp Routes

Key worlds within a region of space usually owe their status to a confluence of stable passages through the Warp, allowing easy passage to and from their ports. These passages are represented as Warp Routes on the Crusade Map. Warp Routes are key to deploying forces during the Crusade Turn.

Each Territory should typically be connected to at least two other Territories. In some cases, Warp Routes might lead off the Crusade Map, rather than attaching to other Territories. There should typically be a minimum of two such Warp Routes, plus an additional one for every four Territories. These are mostly for use by Reinforcements from outside the targeted region. However, one of them should be nominated by the Warmaster as his Mustering Point. All his initial forces should deploy from this Warp Route on the first Crusade Turn.

Drawing the Crusade Map

The Crusade Map can easily be represented as a drawing on a piece of scratch paper. Each Territory can be represented as a labelled dot or small circle. They should be sufficiently spaced out on the paper to allow notes about their current status to be jotted down nearby as the Black Crusade progresses. Once the Territories are in place, the Warp Routes can be noted by drawing lines between connected Territories, or from Territories at the edge of the Crusade Map out to the edge of the paper. GMs who are interested in more elaborate set-ups might want to look at the chart of the Screaming Vortex on pages 324–325 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook or similar star charts elsewhere in **WARHAMMER 40,000** **ROLEPLAY** books, and illustrate their Crusade Map accordingly. While a simple Crusade Map sketch is sufficient, a more impressive rendition can go a long way towards making the Black Crusade memorable and impressive for the players.

I SHALL HANDLE THIS MYSELF!

The rules for running a Black Crusade are by no means intended as a substitute for actual role-playing encounters and scenarios. Instead, they are intended as a supplement to the PCs' actions, to depict what occurs in locations where the PCs cannot go themselves without imposing on the GM to determine results entirely without structure. The PCs' actions throughout the Black Crusade take the form of Key Events, as described on pages 82–83. However, it is possible that some groups might find themselves more interested in the Key Events than the rest of the Black Crusade. If so, the GM can increase the normal benefits of resolving a Key Event based on the narrative developments that occurred (so if the PCs stormed the bastion of the planet's governor and executed him in front of his assembled generals, they might automatically deplete any remaining Defender Strength as the generals surrendered.) The GM can also choose to run more Key Events per Crusade Turn than the default number if he wishes, and is encouraged to insert minor roleplaying encounters alongside the Key Events even if he does not.

RUNNING THE CRUSADE

Once the Warmaster has laid out his plans for the basic form of the Black Crusade, it is time for the war itself to take shape. The Warmaster and the other Heretics have assembled their resources and called in allies and minions, and now they launch their assault on the Imperium. The basic structure used to run a Black Crusade is relatively simple: The Heretics choose a goal, and move their forces across the Crusade Map over a number of Crusade Turns in an attempt to achieve it. In each Crusade Turn, the players assign their forces, resolve the conflicts where they are not present, and play through key events at whatever location from which they choose to lead. At the end of a Crusade Turn, they might gain or lose forces or other key assets. If the Heretics end their last Crusade Turn without achieving their Goal, their Black Crusade fails as their discontented minions turn on them or the Imperium musters enough forces to repel the assault.

Setting a Goal

Before the first Crusade Turn begins, the Warmaster should set a goal he hopes to achieve during the Black Crusade. Typically, this involves conquering the targeted region of space (represented by depleting all Territories on the Crusade Map of their Defender Strength and Corrupting them). He could also choose another goal such as Corrupting or depleting the Defender Strength of a significant Territory (or completely conquering it by both slaying its defenders and Corrupting it), or moving a certain amount of Fleets off the Crusade Map through a particular Warp Route other than the Mustering Point (representing carving a path into the inner reaches of Imperial space). If the Black Crusade's goal involves a specific Territory or Warp Route, it should be one far from the Mustering Point, and with significant defences—the gods are unimpressed by those who set themselves simple challenges. If the Black Crusade ends its last Crusade Turn without the Warmaster's goal being achieved, the Crusade fails as described above.

Determining Crusade Length

Any effort on the scale of a Black Crusade is as vulnerable as it is mighty. Turmoil and unrest within the ranks can tear it apart, while such an incursion inevitably provokes the Imperium to respond with all available force. As such, the Warmaster's forces operate under a time limit set by the GM. This limit is flexible and can be adjusted according to the GM's discretion, but should never be less than a number of Crusade Turns equal to the number of Territories on the Crusade Map, and should generally not exceed four times that number. If the Warmaster has set himself a particularly simple goal, the GM should keep the time limit between one to two times the number of Territories in Crusade Turns, as the Warmaster's forces might suspect weakness from any leader who cannot achieve such a goal quickly. By contrast, a Black Crusade fighting over a particularly vast region of space should receive at least three times the number of Territories in Crusade Turns, as the Imperial forces in the area are already stretched to their limits, and thus slower to respond.

THE CRUSADE TURN

The Crusade Turn proceeds in four phases, each with a number of additional steps. The phases of the Crusade Turn are: Deploy Forces, Resolve Conflicts, Corrupt Territories, and Assess Crusade Strength. Rules for resolving these phases are detailed below.

Deploy Forces

At the beginning of the Crusade Turn, the Warmaster must deploy any forces not currently engaged in planetary conflict. This includes all his Fleets, Landing Fleets, Cults, and Cabals, as well as any Hosts not already deployed to a Territory with Defender Strength remaining. Hosts must be assigned to a Fleet or Landing Fleet with transport capacity to be redeployed. Lieutenants are deployed in the Assign Leadership step of this phase, described below.

During the Deploy Forces phase, a given Crusade Force may move between Territories separated by a single Warp Route without risk. The Warmaster may move some of his eligible Crusade Forces between Territories separated by two Warp Routes. When he does so, roll 1d10 for every such deployment. If the result is less than or equal to the number of Crusade Forces moved in this way, then one of the Crusade Forces being moved is lost in the Warp. The loss should be determined randomly, but any Hosts assigned to a Fleet or Landing Fleet lost in this way are also lost.

Assign Leadership

After the Warmaster has deployed his Crusade forces, he needs to assign his Lieutenants to the battlefields of the Black Crusade. Lieutenants invariably command the swiftest ships and the surest rituals of travel (save for those reserved by the Warmaster and the other Heretics!) and can travel to any Territory to which the Warmaster has deployed forces. Each Territory being fought over may be assigned a single Lieutenant. Any Lieutenants not deployed remain by the Warmaster's side and can be present for Key Events at the GM's discretion.

Naval Conflicts

Naval Conflicts occur when Fleets or Landing Fleets are deployed to Territories with a Blockade Strength greater than 0 (including when they are redeployed to the same territory for multiple Crusade Turns in a row). Blockade Strength is found on Territories with an initial Defender Strength of 50 or more, starts out as equal to half the Territory's initial Defender Strength. Naval Conflicts are resolved as an Opposed Test, although the relative strengths of the forces are used instead of Characteristics or Skills (so that, instead of an **Opposed Strength Test** or something similar, the battle is handled as an **Opposed Naval Conflict Value Test**). The Warmaster's forces have a Naval Conflict Value equal to 20 times the number of Fleets present in the Territory plus 10 times the number of Landing Fleets present in the Territory, while the defenders have a Naval Conflict Value equal to their Blockade Strength. If the Warmaster's forces win the Naval Conflict, they reduce the Blockade Strength in the region by 5 (to a minimum of 0) for each Degree of Success on the Opposed Test. A Fleet or Landing Fleet (randomly determined) is lost for every three Degrees of Failure, or on any successful Test that results in doubles (such as 22, 33, or 77).

The results of Naval Conflicts can influence the ground war in a territory. During the Resolve Conflicts phase, the side whose naval forces won the **Opposed Naval Conflict Value Test** gain +10 to their **Opposed Conflict Value Test**. If a Territory has a Blockade Strength above 0 and a Naval Conflict was not fought in this step, the planet's defenders gain +10 to their **Opposed Conflict Value Test** in the Resolve Conflicts phase just as if they had won a Naval Conflict.

If there is a Lieutenant assigned to the Territory with experience in naval warfare (as determined by the GM), the Warmaster's forces gain +10 to the **Opposed Naval Conflict Value Test**. Also note that bonuses towards **Opposed Conflict Value Tests** only apply to the planetary struggles of the Resolve Conflicts phase unless specified otherwise.

Resolve Conflicts

After the Warmaster's forces have been deployed across the region and any relevant Naval Conflicts, the Resolve Conflicts phase begins. In this phase, bloody war is waged over the assorted battlegrounds of the Black Crusade as the Warmaster's forces attempt to slaughter all opposition.

The Warmaster selects Contested Territories across the Crusade Map and resolves the conflicts on them one by one. A Contested Territory is one to which the Warmaster has deployed one or more Hosts, and which retains a Defender Strength above 0. In addition, the Warmaster and the other Heretics may involve themselves on these worlds (or even more secure worlds, if the GM allows it) through Key Events. Once a conflict has been resolved on each Contested Territory, and each PC has participated in a Key Event, the Resolve Conflicts phase ends.

Leaderless Conflicts

Conflicts in a Contested Territory where no Lieutenant is present are referred to as Leaderless Conflicts. The Hosts deployed to these battlefields rapidly become disorganised, and turn to plunder and pillage over conquest. However, they remain fierce servants of the Dark Gods, and are still deadly to their enemies despite their preoccupations.

Leaderless Conflicts are resolved as an Opposed Test, although the relative strengths of the forces are used instead of Characteristics or Skills (so that, instead of an **Opposed Strength Test** or something similar, the battle is handled as an **Opposed Conflict Value Test**). The Warmaster's forces have a Conflict Value equal to 20 times the number of Hosts present in the Territory, while the planet's garrisons have a Conflict Value equal to their Defender Strength. If the Warmaster's forces win an Leaderless Conflict, they reduce the Defender Strength of the Territory by 5 for each Degree of Success on the Opposed Test. However, a Host is lost for every two Degrees of Failure, or on a successful Test that results in doubles (such as 22, 33, or a similar roll).

Led Conflicts

Conflicts in a Contested Territory where a Lieutenant is present are referred to as Led Conflicts. The Hosts deployed to these battlefields benefit from the cunning tactics, disciplined leadership, and devastating prowess of a true Champion of Chaos. They are more deadly on the battlefield, more devastating to their foes, and less vulnerable to the enemy's stratagems.

Led Conflicts are resolved as an Opposed Test, although the relative strengths of the forces are used instead of Characteristics or Skills (so that, instead of an **Opposed Strength Test** or something similar, the battle is handled as an **Opposed Conflict Value Test**). The Warmaster's forces have a Conflict Value equal to 20 times the number of Hosts present in the Territory, plus an additional 10 for the Lieutenant, while the planet's garrisons have a Conflict Value equal to their Defender Strength. If the Warmaster's forces win a Led Conflict, they reduce the Defender Strength of the Territory by 10 for each Degree of Success on the Opposed Test. However, a Host is lost for every three Degrees of Failure, or on a successful Test that results in doubles (such as 22, 33, or 77). Note that particularly exceptional success in a Led Conflict can lead to the Lieutenant involved becoming Discontent and risking betrayal, as described on page 84.

Key Events

During each Crusade Turn, the Heretics have a chance to make a deeper impact on the battlefronts of their Black Crusade. At any point during the Resolve Conflicts phase, one or more Heretics may declare that they wish to participate in a battle directly, make a personal appearance to potentially treacherous underlings, or perform some other action that contributes to the Black Crusade. All of these options fall into the category of Key Events. Each Heretic can only participate in one Key Event per Crusade Turn, although multiple Heretics can participate in a Key Event together for additional effect. Although Key Events are part of the Resolve Conflicts phase, the Heretics should propose them at the beginning of each Crusade Turn or earlier, in order to give the GM time to prepare.

A Key Event is run in the same manner as a normal adventure of the sort the Heretics participated in before launching the Black Crusade. However, if any Heretics are not participating, the Key Event should generally be kept short. During the Key Event, the Heretics should battle their foes, role-play their interactions with the forces they command, and otherwise do all the things that the abstractions of the Crusade Turn do not cover. Once the Key Event is complete, the GM should modify the state of the Territory it affected. Some possible results include:

- Reduce the affected Territory's Blockade Strength by up to 5 points or its Defender Strength by up to 10 points per participating PC (in addition to other losses from that phase).
- Make a **Challenging (+0) Corruption Test** to Corrupt the Territory in place of the normal difficulty, using the highest Corruption score among the Heretics participating in the Key Event, and adding +10 to the Test for each participating PC past the first. Failure means that no further attempt to Corrupt the Territory can be made during this Crusade Turn.
- The Heretics gain an additional Host rallied from the inhabitants of the Territory where the Key Event took place. It is treated as having been deployed to that Territory during the Deploy Forces phase, and can participate in any Conflicts occurring there as normal. If the Territory was Corrupted, it could instead produce an additional 2 Plunder Points per Heretic participating in the Key Event, to be spent as normal.
- Remove the Discontent status from a Lieutenant, and render him incapable of becoming Discontent for one Crusade Turn per participating Heretic (as he remembers why he fears them).



III: LORDS OF ENTROPY

Corrupt Territories

After resolving all Conflicts and Key Events, the Corrupt Territories phase begins. In this phase, the Warmaster's forces work to consolidate their gains and to dedicate their battlefields to the Dark Gods. The philosophy of Chaos is instilled upon any survivors of the Territories being Corrupted, and great monuments to the Warmaster and the Ruinous Powers are erected over sites once held sacred to the Emperor of Mankind. If these efforts reach completion, the Territories become Corrupted and provide new resources and recruits for the Black Crusade as they become dedicated to the Warmaster's service.

The Warmaster selects Territories vulnerable to Corruption across the Crusade Map and resolves his efforts to corrupt them one by one. A Territory is vulnerable to Corruption if it is Contested (as defined under Resolve Conflicts on page 82), or if its Blockade Strength and Defender Strength are both at 0. When attempts have been made to Corrupt all vulnerable Territories, the Corrupt Territories phase ends.

Contested Territories

Corrupting a Territory over which battles still wage is possible, but more difficult than such efforts would be in the absence of active opposition. However, such a feat greatly aids the war effort if it is achieved, as the defender's garrisons defect rather than fight, and insurgents dedicated to the Dark Powers wreak havoc on the enemy's supply lines. To Corrupt a Contested Territory, the Warmaster must make a **Hellich (-60) Corruption Test**, representing the fervour he inspires and the power his forces lend to the Warp. If the Black Crusade is led by more than one PC, any one of them may make the Test (it may also be appropriate for the Test to be made by another PC if a Key Event recently occurred within the Territory that did

not involve the Warmaster). Success indicates the Territory is Corrupted. Whenever the Warmaster's forces win an **Opposed Conflict Value Test** within a Corrupted Territory, they reduce the Defender Strength of that Territory by an additional 10 points as treachery and defection depletes the opposing forces.

In some cases, such as when a Territory is the long-held stronghold of rival servants of Chaos, a Territory may be listed as automatically Corrupted on the Crusade Map. The normal benefits of a Corrupted Territory apply in these cases, as the followers of the Dark Gods are fickle and are wont to follow the victor of a battle between champions.

Conquered Territories

Territories without living defenders are a simple matter to Corrupt. Eventually the landscape becomes a warren of rune-carved ziggurats and twisted obelisks proclaiming the glory of the Warmaster, until mortal men cannot gaze upon the world's surface without going mad. In time, Corruption is certain.

However, the demands of war mean that the Warmaster cannot rest on such assurances, and he must make a **Very Hard (-30) Corruption Test** to Corrupt such Territories, representing the fervour he inspires and the power his forces lend to the Warp. Success indicates the Territory is Corrupted.

Losing Corrupted Territories

Although the corrupting influence of the Ruinous Powers is vast, the stubborn audacity of the Imperium's defenders is also incredible. In some cases, these two forces go head-to-head as the followers of the False Emperor attempt to reclaim what now belongs to the Dark Gods. In any Crusade Turn in which a Corrupted Territory began with a Defender Strength above 0 (excluding the Crusade Turn in which it was Corrupted),

TABLE 3-6: PLUNDER AND CRUSADE FORCES

Crusade Force	Plunder Point Cost
Host	3
Cult	4
Cabal	4
Fleet or Landing Fleet	5
Lieutenant	6

roll 1d10. If the result of the die is equal to or lower than the number of Crusade Turns since being Corrupted in which it has maintained a Defender Strength above 0, the Territory is no longer Corrupted, as the defenders wash over the works of the Warmaster with cleansing fire.

Example: A Territory with a Defender Strength of 0 receives reinforcements in the Assess Crusade Strength phase, bringing its Defender Strength to 5. In the following Crusade Turn, it begins with a Defender Strength above 0, and is eligible to roll to lose Corrupted status. If it reaches the Corrupt Territory Strength without its Defender Strength dropping to 0 again (such as would be the case if any Hosts still deployed to the Territory win an Opposed Conflict Value Test with the newly arrived defenders), then it ceases to be Corrupted on a roll of 1 on 1d10. Should it remain Corrupted but keep a Defender Strength above 0 throughout the next Crusade Turn, it would cease to be Corrupted on a roll of 2 or less on 1d10, and so on.

Assess Crusade Strength

The final phase of the Crusade Turn details what happens in the brief lulls between battles and slaughters across the Crusade Map. In the Assess Crusade Strength Phase, the Warmaster is able to recruit new Crusade Forces from Territories he has Corrupted, and must deal with the risks of treachery from his most ambitious Lieutenants. He may also find his plans complicated by reinforcements arriving for his enemies, or by the unexpected factors changing the scope of his battles, such as intervention by meddling Eldar Farseers or the arrival of an Ork Warboss with something to prove. After going through each step of the Assess Crusade Strength Phase, the current Crusade Turn ends, the count moves one step closer towards the time limit established for the Warmaster's chances at victory, and it is time to start again at the Deploy Forces phase.

Drawing New Crusade Forces

While a canny Warmaster ensures that whatever forces he has when he launches his Black Crusade can see him through to his goal, it rarely hurts to make use of assets seized from conquered worlds. Battalions of fanatical new devotees, newly indoctrinated cultists, wyrds freed from Imperial shackles, and even the captured vessels of the Imperial Navy can all bolster the ranks of the Black Crusade.

New Crusade Forces of this sort can be gained once the Warmaster has Corrupted one or more Territories. At the beginning of the Drawing New Crusade Forces step, every

TABLE 3-7: ENEMY REINFORCEMENTS

Territory Status	Reinforcements Arrive
Uncontested	1d10 roll of 7–10
Contested	1d10 roll of 8–10
At 0 Defender Strength	1d10 roll of 9–10
Territory Modifiers	Roll Modifiers
Corrupted	–1
Adjacent to a Warp Route leading off the Crusade Map	+1
Adjacent to Warp Routes leading only to Corrupted or Contested Territories	–1

Corrupted Territory generates 2 Plunder Points. Plunder Points can be spent on additional Crusade Forces for the costs described in **Table 3-6: Plunder and Crusade Forces**. Crusade Forces bought with Plunder Points are treated as having been deployed to the Territory that provided their purchase cost. Any Plunder Points not immediately spent on Crusade Forces should be noted on the Crusade Map, and added to the total generated by the Territory in the following Crusade Turn. Plunder Points for multiple Corrupted Territories are tracked separately, and cannot be combined to acquire a single Crusade Force. Any accumulated Plunder Points are lost if a Territory loses its Corrupted Status.

Treachery and Discontent

Though vital to the execution of the Warmaster's orders, Lieutenants present a risk to their masters if they cannot be kept in line. Any Lieutenant who becomes too successful without being kept in line by fear or shared spoils may decide he is better off operating independently from the constraints under which the Warmaster places him. If the **Opposed Conflict Value Test** for a Led Conflict in the Resolve Conflicts phase is won by four or more degrees, the Lieutenant deployed to that Territory becomes Discontent. During the Treachery and Discontent step, the Warmaster rolls 1d10 for each Discontent Lieutenant in his forces. On a result of 9, the Lieutenant betrays him, abandoning the Black Crusade, and leading half the Hosts (rounded down) in whatever Territory to which he has been deployed to do the same. A given Lieutenant can be made to be no longer Discontent at any time by spending 1 Plunder Point from the Territory to which he has been deployed, or from any Territory connected to that Territory by a single Warp Route. The Warmaster or other Heretics may also intervene through Key Events to take steps against Discontent Lieutenants, as described in **The Key Events** page 82.

Enemy Reinforcements

Though the Imperium mobilises for war with a slowness born of galaxy-spanning bureaucracy, even a trivial deployment of its considerable resources can halt a warhost in its path. Skip this step for the first Crusade Turn in a Black Crusade, as the targeted region reels under the sudden onslaught of the Warmaster's forces. During subsequent Enemy Reinforcements steps, roll 1d10 for each Territory on the Crusade Map and

consult **Table 3-7: Enemy Reinforcements**. This can represent anything from reinforcements arriving from another Territory or even from off the Crusade Map, to an enlisting of militia forces or conscripts to defend a planet under siege. A Territory increases its Defender Strength by 1d10 (to a maximum of 100) if it receives reinforcements.

If the Warmaster manages to deploy his forces so that every Territory on the Crusade Map is Contested or at a Defender Strength of 0, he is in a position to cut off internal reinforcements. If this occurs, only Territories adjacent to Warp Routes leading off the Crusade Map may receive reinforcements until one or more Territories on the Crusade Map is uncontested and possesses a Defender Strength above 0.



Map Events (Optional)

If the GM wants to introduce an additional element of chance to running a Black Crusade, he can use **Table 3-8: Map Events**. The decision whether or not to do so should be made at the outset of the Black Crusade and kept consistent throughout. If the GM opts to use Map Events, he should roll 1d100 at the end of each Crusade Turn and add a complication to the proceedings based on the result.

TABLE 3-8: MAP EVENTS

1d100 Roll Event

01-40	No Event... this time!
41-48	The Dark Gods demand sacrifice! The Warmaster must sacrifice 1d5 Plunder Points to the Dark Gods by the end of the next Crusade Turn or suffer their displeasure. Failure to do so causes the Warmaster to lose 1d5 Infamy and gain 1 Corruption Point as a Failing.
49-56	The Dark Gods set a goal for the Warmaster. Randomly select a Territory on the Crusade Map. If the Black Crusade can Corrupt it or reduce its Defender Strength to 0 within 3 Crusade Turns, each Heretic gains 1d5 Infamy.
57-63	Blood for the Blood God! The Lord of Skulls demands slaughter from the Warmaster. His forces must deplete a total of 2d10+10 Defender Strength from Territories across the Crusade Map by the end of the next Crusade Turn or be driven into an indiscriminate bloodlust. If this occurs, one randomly determined Host is killed in the frenzy. If the Black Crusade is Dedicated to a Chaos Power other than Khorne, ignore this result.
64-70	The Great Manipulator interferes. The Warmaster finds himself deprived of the guidance of sorcery and divination while the Warp churns with Tzeentch's schemes. The Warmaster gains no benefit from Cabals for the next 1d5-1 Crusade Turns. After that period, the Warmaster gains 1 Plunder Point on a random Territory for each Cabal in his forces, as Tzeentch's inscrutable favour falls upon him. If the Black Crusade is Dedicated to a Chaos Power other than Tzeentch, ignore this result.
71-76	Pay tribute to the Prince of Pleasure. The Warmaster is given a chance to impress his patron with a show of depravity and power. If the Heretics can Corrupt one or more new Territories by the end of the next Crusade Turn, each Heretic gains 1d5 Infamy. If the Black Crusade is Dedicated to a Chaos Power other than Slaanesh, ignore this result.
77-81	The Fly Lord feasts. Decay and ruin spreads from the Imperium to the Warmaster's own forces, testing their dedication to Nurgle. The Warmaster loses 1d10 Plunder Points from random Territories across the Crusade Map. For each Plunder Point lost in this way, each Heretic gains 1 Infamy. If the Black Crusade is Dedicated to a Chaos Power other than Nurgle, ignore this result.
82-85	A rival Chaos Champion challenges the Warmaster. During the next Crusade Turn, the Warmaster (and any other Heretics who wish to become involved) must spend a Key Event to deal with a challenge to the Warmaster's power by another mighty follower of Chaos.
86-90	The Farseers of the Eldar see fit to meddle in the Warmaster's plans. During the next Crusade Turn, the GM may choose to involve one or more Heretics in a Key Event where they must halt an Eldar strike force or survive the schemes of Eldar assassins. Otherwise, the GM may re-roll any two die rolls made by forces opposing the Warmaster as the Eldar tip the scales of fate.
91-94	WAAAGH! An Ork Warboss arrives in the region aboard a space hulk full of Greenskin warriors. Randomly select a Territory on the Crusade Map for the Warboss to claim. Its Defender Strength is immediately set to 75, and the Territory can no longer be Corrupted.
95-97	The ancients rise from a slumber of aeons. Select a random Territory on the Crusade Map. The Warmaster loses half of any Hosts deployed to that Territory, and its Defender Strength is also reduced by half. After this sudden slaughter, the ancients return to their hidden tombs.
98-99	A Space Marine strike force arrives from outside the warzone. The GM may choose to involve one or more Heretics in a Key Event where they must deal with the Space Marine assault. Otherwise, randomly choose one Territory adjacent to a Warp Route leading off of the Crusade Map. That Territory gains 20 Defender Strength (to a maximum of 100).
100	A Living Saint arises, inspiring the Imperium's defenders with the Emperor's manifest will. All Territories on the Crusade Map gain 10 Defender Strength, to a maximum of 100. However, if the Saint can be defeated in a climactic Key Event, all Territories on the Crusade Map lose 20 Defender Strength as whole garrisons fall.



THE PESTILENT WORLDS

"Your boasts are empty, little sorcerer. All eventually fall to the Grandfather, no matter how they might scheme or plot."

—Gullivox Arcul, Plaguemeister of the Burrowing Flies

It is easy to believe that the Screaming Vortex exists eternally, for here, time rarely flows in a coherent path. Cyclopean statuary, carved with unfathomable runes that burn the soul, seem to predate the parched worlds of their residence. Ancient chests wrapped in chains, drifting between blind stars, contain scrolls depicting civilisations thriving beneath stars that are frozen clouds that have yet to ignite. There is only debate as to its beginning, and even the most powerful sryers have not foreseen its cessation. For those who follow the Pestilent Lord, though, such matters are of little concern. With their god there is the certainty that all things have an ending and rebirth, and in both there is only Nurgle.

His foetid influences are most readily felt in areas where the Vortex dips too deeply into the Warp and melds into insane foams of madness. No region is exempt, however, for wherever there is life and purpose there is decay and ruin. His chants echo across the stars, the graven tones thumping like the beating of some vast heart that pumps Nurgle's essence across the Vortex. Tendrils of ætheric rot carry the pealing of his heavy, rusted bells, announcing new plagues for the glory of the God of

Decay. Flies cloud the skies, dimming native sunlight beneath the weight of billions of choking insects. He proudly rules his pestilent worlds where there is no life but that which feeds upon decay, and flesh morbidly continues past the point where life should flee screaming from the obscenity it has become.

Nurgle's power waxes and wanes with life and death, always at its height just when life and hope is at its apogee. His greatest plagues emerge in these times, bringing the glories of decay throughout the stars. Loremancers still furtively whisper of the Necrosis, one such event that nearly drowned the Screaming Vortex many millennia ago, when times spoke of the greatest of empires and mightiest of warlords. Appearing from beyond the farthest reaches of the Vortex, it grew in energy as it churned across the Anteciduals. Pestilent waves poured over worlds in noxious showers, leaving only capering Nurglings and sonorous Plaguebearers to tally the dead and the diseases that felled them.

It finally roared through the Frozen Heart and crashed into the centre of this damned realm in a crescendo that reverberated throughout the Vortex. Stars had their burning atmospheres blown into the void, leaving only cold, barren cores of rusted iron. Planets were torn into listless debris, what life that could survive was reduced to base fungi. The befouling wave appeared exhausted, perhaps vented into the space that surrounds the Vortex, and new planets emerged from the receding effects to remake the realm. Yet those left behind, their souls forever touched by Nurgle's mouldering gaze, knew even as they eventually succumbed, that there is no real finality except for their god's inevitable dominion over all.

PYURULTIDE

"Subject 1379-a; this creature exhibits enlarged mandibles, powerful biting reflex, and becomes highly aggressive during vivisection. Would suggest subject pacification before next round of examinations."

—Magos Biologis Devran Saar, now called the Entomancer

Pyurultide hangs in the void like a suppurating wound. A pustulant boil amidst the stars, a blight in space even amongst the varied and terrible wonders of the Screaming Vortex. Clutched forever to Nurgle's rotting breast, Pyurultide stands as a shining example of his paternal love. A festering reminder to all who survey it of the inevitability of decay, the state to which all things must eventually pass.

The planet itself is wreathed in miasmal clouds of toxic vapour. Centuries of biological and chemical warfare by its decayed inhabitants have rendered the atmosphere near-lethal. While still barely breathable, prolonged exposure will spell death as surely as any conventional weapon. Certain areas of the surface are completely lethal. The various gases and corrosive compounds, having settled into pockets of lingering death, consume the unwary in mere moments. Beneath these poisonous clouds, the scars of Pyurultide's legacy of destruction cover its surface. A soup of mud and flesh, pulverised into a near liquid state by artillery bombardments, covers the planet. Rusting hulks of shattered tanks, APCs, and other war machines dot the morass like islands jutting out of a sea of rot. Abandoned earthworks and trench lines riddle the surface, snaking between ruined bunkers and twisted forests of rusting razorwire.

THE SHINING CITIES

Nearer the centre of each continent, larger, more intact buildings begin to appear. The ruins of what once may have been cities emerge from the ever-present smog of pollutants and poison gases. These ruins stand in stark contrast to the rest of the planet's structures, showing a curious degree of artistry in the design. Soaring towers, now broken and blasted, speak of an ancient history that valued form over function. Wide boulevards and elegant plazas suggest that once a race of beings lived here that did not favour destruction but instead aspired to loftier goals of art and perfection. The impact craters and rotting bodies of the dead stand in mute testament that those days are long gone.

THE LIVING SEA

Away from the ruined cities with their enigmatic designs and centuries-old secrets, lurks another curiosity, one of an altogether more loathsome aspect. Pyurultide possesses no oceans. No vast expanses of water separate the continents and no briny depths fill the yawning voids between lands, instead a living mass washes against the various coasts, a sea of insects.

Clouds of foul, chitinous bodies, ceaseless trillions in number, writhe between the land masses. A teeming mass of life so huge as to be incomprehensible to normal minds, it crawls, flutters, and squirms in great tides across the face of the planet. The great swarms are completely inimical to life, comprised of countless species that bite, sting, saw, or spurt, they are capable of killing a human and stripping the flesh from bone in seconds. The various Pox Tribes that dwell on Pyurultide know to stay away from the coasts, but even distance is no guarantee of safety. On occasion, the vast living sea has swept inland, like a tsunami of creeping death. Engulfing any unlucky enough to be caught in its path, these hideous tidal waves of clicking mandibles and buzzing wings wreak unfathomable destruction, before losing cohesion and dissipating, often miles inland. Survivors emerging from their makeshift shelters find nothing but gore-splattered bones and countless billions of insect husks.

Despite the terrible fate that awaits any who approach the living sea, many foolhardy heretics have tried their luck at plumbing its depths. Rumours abound of lost relics, stable Warp gates and other great treasures languishing deep within the insect ocean. Pirate lords and aspiring champions of the Ruinous Powers speak of the fabled Tyrant's Cord and its legendary ties to the planet. Other, wiser minds instead talk of the mythical Daemon Hives, great spawning chambers of nightmarish proportions that constantly squirm with noisome life. Billions of larvae and pupae suckle blindly at the glistening nutrient pools before growing into foul adulthood and emerging into the swarm. But worse, they speak of the terrible hive centres where the colossal Queens nest, endlessly producing eggs to feed the never-ending sea, and guarded by thousands of drones and specially adapted soldier species.

THE POX TRIBES

Despite its caustic atmosphere and deadly oceans, Pyurultide is not devoid of human life. In fact, it supports a population of similar size to most other planets in the Screaming Vortex and, similar to those planets, the Pox Tribes that live here have been forged in the crucible of suffering. Centuries ago, two distinct factions existed on Pyurultide, the ancestors of what would one day become the Pox Tribes and a race of beings now referred to as the Shining Ones. As with a great many mysteries of the Vortex, who or what the Shining Ones were and what became of them is lost, existing now only as myth and rumour. Many believe they were an ancient and now long dead race similar to the Eldar, others that they were simply humans from a different part of the galaxy, drawn into the Vortex by the whim of the Ruinous Powers.

Whatever the truth, it is known that they were a technologically advanced race, possessing arms and equipment similar to that of the hated Imperium. It is widely believed they lived in the great cities at the centre of each continent, many Vortex scholars go so far as to attribute the construction of those cities to them as well. It is also known they warred with the degenerate Pox Tribes that lived further out towards the coasts.

The Pox Tribes long venerated Grandfather Nurgle, seeing his divine hand in the great living seas that plagued their every moment. They saw the elegant Shining Cities as an affront to Nurgle's putrid majesty. Uniting together, the tribes launched

THE TYRANT'S CORD

Game Masters in possession of the **BLACK CRUSADE GM'S SCREEN** might be familiar with Pyurultide and its denizens, history, and links to the mythic artefact known as the Tyrant's Cord. The events of the **RIVALS FOR GLORY** assume that the heretics did not immediately travel to Pyurultide following their successful acquisition of the Tyrant's Cord.

In addition to its various powers, the Tyrant's Cord is a symbol of profound significance to many of the Pox Tribes on Pyurultide. Once owned by the leaders of the Shining Ones, it bestowed upon them terrible allure and the ability to bend others to their wills, allowing them to dominate a huge portion of the planet. Following the war with the Pox Tribes and their eventual defeat, the Tyrant's Cord vanished, many of the defeated Shining Ones believed that it vanished during the war and led to their eventual downfall. Although they now are no little more than ragged husks in service to a decayed and rotting master, they still remember on some instinctual level that they were not always as they are now.

If a Heretic were to return the Tyrant's Cord to Pyurultide, it could be the pebble that starts an avalanche. Thousands of the Pox Tribes would be drawn to its power. Many may remember their time before the defeat and the destruction of the Shining Cities, shaking off their malaise and returning to the worship of the Dark Prince. Others might remain true to Grandfather Nurgle but wish to follow the bearer of the cord nevertheless. A new chapter of the ongoing war could start, with the Heretics at its fore. Perhaps the Tyrant's Cord might grant its bearer some small measure of control over the Living Seas, able to direct the Tsunamis or parting its unfathomable depths to reveal the nightmare hives at its centre.

If the Heretics are able to use the Tyrant's Cord to unify Pyurultide's populace they stand to gain a huge, if poorly equipped army, one with centuries of experience and an unholy resistance to toxins and biological agents. They might ally with the Entomancer using their new found army to force his compliance or perhaps using their supernatural sway over the Living Seas to grant him unprecedented access to new research. With these weapons and the secrets of the Shining Cities and Nightmare Hives at their disposal the Heretics are taking their first steps towards beginning their own Black Crusade.

a vicious attack on their hated enemies. At first, the Shining Ones technological superiority gave them a significant advantage. Against the simple weapons of the Pox Tribes they saw no real threat. But the Lord of Decay's blessing granted the Pox Tribes a monstrous durability. They were able to withstand the terrible injuries before succumbing, enduring the weapons of the Shining Ones, seemingly without pain or disability. Very soon, the Shining Ones were beginning to retreat. The Pox Tribes seized their fallen weapons and drove them deep inside the cities, exterminating them and bringing the beauteous towers to ruin. The final fate of the Shining Ones is unknown; many believe they were simply wiped out by the victorious Pox Tribes, but one theory suggests they survived by embracing the favour of the Fly Lord.

Following the victory over the Shining Ones, the Pox Tribes began to feud amongst themselves. A second war broke out as the once unified Tribes broke apart, unable to coexist. This second war continues today, centuries later. The death toll is beyond counting, but this is no mindless slaughter like those perpetrated by the minions of the Blood God, nor is this a tactical masterwork of feint and counter with each side jostling for the advantage. The war on Pyurultide is a slow, inexorable march toward oblivion, a meat grinder where a thousand souls a day are cast aside so one army can move ten feet of trench line. The technology of the past is long gone, replaced with the most basic las and solid projectile weapons the Pox Tribes can scrounge together. Sometime past the tribes unleashed deadly viral and chemical weapons against each other in an attempt to gain an advantage. These awful creations, while pleasing to Grandfather Nurgle, have scarred the planet, resulting in the corrosive clouds of death that now shroud the planet.

Constant exposure to the caustic air, a lifetime of struggling stalemate, and Nurgle's own beneficent gifts has wreaked awful changes on the Tribes. Mutations of the most repellent kind are commonplace: suppurating sores, clawed

limbs, twisted backs, and melted flesh adorn every tribesman. Many have become fused with their weapons and equipment, diseased flesh has grown over gas masks and trigger guards with a revolting fecundity. Many tribesmen have swollen to enormous size, becoming tumescent bulges of rotting flesh or towering monsters of claws and oozing muscle.

Amongst the most successful tribes, Blight Drones have begun to appear. The arrival of these foul Daemon Engines is a mystery, with many of the Pox Tribes believing it is a sign of Nurgle's favour, or of hidden Warp-infused manufacturums recently discovered. Whatever the truth, the Blight Drones move across the shattered landscape sowing revulsion and death wherever they pass. These Daemon-machine hybrids are of particular interest to one denizen of Pyurultide, a secretive figure of myth and fabrication known as the Entomancer.

THE MASTER COLLECTOR

The creature now referred to as the Entomancer was once a respected and knowledgeable Magos Biologis of the Adeptus Mechanicus called Devran Saar. Part of an Explorator fleet, he was tasked with cataloguing and classifying new species of flora and fauna during the Angevin Crusade. Absorbed with his work and freed from the petty concerns of morality and emotion, Saar excelled, successfully adding thousands of entries into the datavaults of his fleet. As the crusade pressed on and the Calixis Sector began to take shape, Saar's Explorator fleet grew too bold and voyaged beyond the Imperium's spear tip. They encountered a devastating Warpstorm that ravaged the fleet, ripping vessels asunder and scattering the survivors across the length and breadth of the galaxy. Saar's deteriorating vessel limped back into realspace deep with the Screaming Vortex.

Swiftly caught by reavers, Saar was lucky to escape with his life, piloting one of the few remaining lifeboats away from his stricken ship and down toward the nearest planet, Pyurultide. Finding the planet to be entirely unsuitable for prolonged exposure, Saar sought refuge in a nearby ruined tower of strangely beautiful design. Over the next few days, Saar encountered soldiers of the various Pox Tribes as they fought their war without end. Saar slew several of them and used what little equipment he had left to rebuild them into servitors of a sort. Seeing these horrors, the Pox Tribes learned to avoid Saar's tower, cursing it as haunted or populated by angry Daemons. Fascinated by the tribesmen's mighty endurance and increased pain threshold, he began to study them as a new species.

Saar's life continued in this vein for some time until he encountered a tsunami of the Living Sea. The billions of insects he witnessed filled him with something akin to divine rapture, his mind snapped and he became obsessed with studying the Living Sea, attempting to catalogue every last species within.

Now centuries old, the entity that calls itself "the Entomancer" is quite mad. The entropic atmosphere of Pyurultide and the buckling effects of the Vortex itself have altered Saar's body and implants warping him into an odious conglomeration of man, machine, and insect. His obsessive desires have driven him to make dark pacts with dozens of minor Daemons and petty warlords across the Vortex in order to prolong his life and obtain specimens for study. Those who fail him are soon added to his ever-growing empire of mind-scrubbed automatons or, worse still, bait for the eternally hungry living sea.

SOLDIERS OF THE POX TRIBES

Each of the Pox Tribes on the face of Pyurultide is different. Although united by their devotion to Grandfather Nurgle, each tribe is separated by their unique dedication to a particular, distinct contagion. The Tribes sport many loathsome mutations, and to outsiders, they are nigh-impossible to tell apart, but any scholar looking closer begins to notice certain repeating mutations, or pattern of symptoms.

While all the tribes are abhorrent to look upon, one tribe might be bloated by corpse gas and another swollen by tumescent growths. Certain tribes are be gifted with deadened, rotten flesh that never changes, while others continuously rot and regenerate in perpetuity. The tribes bear these unique gifts like totems, using them to differentiate each other, but they have also taken on religious significance, with tribes holding their exclusive symptoms to be the one true appearance of Nurgle. Believing this, the tribes make war on one another seeking to replace each other's infections with their own. To this end, each tribe has developed powerful and sinister biological weapons, distilled from their own vile excretions.

Although robbed of more advanced technology, the Pox Tribes are still capable of maintaining and constructing simple Las and solid projectile weapons. Occasionally, a tribe discovers a functioning manufactorum or military forge from before the war allowing it to field tanks, artillery, and other larger scale weapons of war. The corrosive atmosphere of Pyurultide inevitably ruins these delicate machines, but for a time, a tribe will make great gains in its tireless pursuit of the enemy.

Gifted with great and terrible endurance, a Pox Tribe soldier does not fall in battle easily. Pox Tribe soldiers are killers that many foes underestimate thanks to their incredible resilience. If ever the Pox Tribes could be unified, the Heretic who ruled them would be a force to be reckoned with indeed.

Pox Tribe Soldier of Pyurultide (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
38	31	39	48	19	29	31	38	20	--

Movement: 1/2/3/6

Wounds: 17

Armour: Ragged bits of flak armour (3 All) **Total TB:** 6

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel), Common Lore (Pyurultide), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (WP), Operate (Surface) (Ag), Parry (WS), Survival (Per) +10.

Talents: Combat Sense, Die Hard, Iron Jaw, Jaded, Resistance (Poison), Weapon Training (Las, Primary, Solid Projectile).

Traits: Unnatural Toughness (2).

Weapons: Battered Autogun (Basic; 100m; S/3/10; 1d10+2 I; Pen: 0; Clip 30; Rld Full; Noxious Discharge; Unreliable), or Corroded Lasgun (Basic; 100m; S/3/-; 1d10+3 E; Pen: 0; Clip 60; Rld Full; Ammo Glutton; Recharge), Rusted Bayonet (Melee; 1d5+3 R; Pen: 0; Toxic [1]), Blight Grenade (Thrown; 9m; S/-/-; 2d10 E; Pen: 0; Clip 1; Rld -; Toxic [2]; Blast [6]).

Gear: Rotted clothing, filthy and decayed trinkets, one reload for primary weapon, 3 Blight Grenades.

PLAGUE OGRYN OF PYURULTIDE

The terrible conditions on Pyurultide have led to almost every inhabitant of the world sporting some manner of mutation. For most this is simply a sign of Father Nurgle's affection, a boon to be worn as a mark of pride. However, for others the Lord of Decay's gifts have changed their bodies so much they can no longer be considered men at all. Their bodies swollen to massive proportions, they tower over the other inhabitants of Pyurultide. Many sport terrible growths of cancerous flesh or huge swathes of dead, necrotised flesh that is impervious to pain. Others erupt into mountains of meat, festooned in tusks, filthy claws, and twisted, gnarled horns. Often, in a perverse discharge of life, these creatures will sprout additional limbs. Some are little more than atrophied stumps, withered and desiccated beyond use, more often though they are perfectly functional. Comprising glistening, raw flesh, they terminate in vicious claws or oozing, dripping orifices.

Although once human, these creatures have now become so common they are virtually a new race. As they bear a distant resemblance to the Ogryn species of abhuman, the Entomancer has designated them Plague Ogryns of Pyurultide, although the Pox Tribes call them simply Hulks or Brutes. Whether these abominations share a common ancestry with true Ogryns is impossible to determine, but has led to the Entomancer to begin research into Pyurultide's history before its emergence into the Vortex.

Plague Ogryn of Pyurultide (Elite)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
45	15	65	55	30	15	20	40	05	--	

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Armour: Diseased Flesh (2 All)

Skills: Intimidate (S) +10, Survival (Per).

Talents: Crushing Blow, Die Hard, Fearless, Iron Jaw, Resistance (Poison), Swift Attack, True Grit.

Traits: Brutal Charge (3), Deadly Natural Weapons, Fear (2), Multiple Arms (3), Regeneration (5), Size (6), Sturdy, Toxic (3), Unnatural Strength (4), Unnatural Toughness (5).

Weapons: Claws and Tusks (Melee; 1d10+10 R; Pen 0; Toxic [3]), Massive Club (Melee; 2d10+10 I; Pen 0; Unbalanced).

Gear: Tattered rags.

Wounds: 32

Total TB: 10

BLIGHT DRONE

Nightmarish flying creatures of hideous proportions and terrible intent, these horrific entities have begun to appear on Pyurultide. Poorly understood by the inhabitants of the world, the Pox Tribesmen believe them to be little more than an awful new form of creature spawned in the depths of the great Living Seas. But the truth is far more horrific.

Blight Drones are Daemon Engines, fuelled by the esoteric energies of the Warp. Appearing as an eerie jumble of insect, flying machine, and Daemon, a Blight Drone buzzes through the polluted skies of Pyurultide on rusted and decayed rotor blades. Often accompanied by vast swarms of "mundane" creatures drawn from the Living Sea, Blight Drones spread fear and death wherever they are found. These entities are known to attack any and all Pox Tribesmen they encounter. Tales of them disgorging awful, corrosive acids, and other, less identifiable fluids onto lone targets, and then settling over the remains to draw them up inside their protective body cases are rampant across the planet.

The Entomancer has become particularly fascinated by the Blight Drones and is eagerly seeking to determine where they have come from and, more importantly, why they have appeared.

Blight Drone (Elite)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
25	34	34	61	52	16	43	52	07	--	

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Armour: Machine (11 All)

Skills: Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag) +10.

Talents: Blind Fighting, Two Weapon Wielder (Ballistic).

Traits: Auto-Stabilised, Daemon Engine (5), Explosion of Pus†, Fear (3), Flyer (8), Machine (11), Nurgle's Blessing††, Size (7), Toxic (4), Unnatural Toughness (5).

Weapons: Mawcannon Vomit (Heavy; 20m; S/-/-; 1d10+8 E; Pen: 5; Clip: —; Rld: —; Toxic [5]; Spray), Mawcannon Phlegm (Heavy; 200m; S/-/-; 3d10+8 E; Pen: 8; Clip: —; Rld: —; Blast [5], Toxic [3]), Reaper Autocannon (Heavy; 300m; S/4/-; 3d10+8 I; Pen: 6; Clip: —; Rld: —; Reliable; Twin-Linked).

†**Explosion of Pus:** When a Blight Drone is destroyed, it explodes in a shower of rancid filth and pus. In addition to any other effects generated by **Table 3-9: Daemon Engine Critical Hit Chart** (see page 96), any characters within 7 metres of the Blight Drone when it is destroyed must make a **Hard (-20) Agility Test** or suffer 3d10+8 Energy Damage with the Corrosive, Irradiated (2), and Toxic (2) Qualities.

††**Nurgle's Blessing:** A Blight Drone is a Daemon Engine of Nurgle, and is always Aligned to Nurgle.

DISSECTION RECORD 83162-GAMMA,
THIRD ATTEMPT (SPECIMEN 3724-G, MID-SIZED DRONE)

THIRD ATTEMPT TO DETERMINE SOURCE OF SPECIMEN'S ABNORMAL TOXICITY BEGINS.
REMOVAL OF CARAPACE PROGRESSING AT 5% INCREASED RATE OVER SECOND ATTEMPT.
IMPROVING AT THIS. MUST REMEMBER VOLATILITY OF SPECIMEN'S BILE GLAND.

BILE GLAND NOW VISIBLE. MUST REMEMBER FAILURE OF SECOND ATTEMPT.
EXPOSURE TO AIR CORRODED ALL SERVITORS IN 7.77 METRE RADIUS.
ATTEMPTING TO REMOVE GLAND NOW.

PUNCTURED POUCH AGAIN. ALL SERVITORS IN 7.77 METRE RADIUS ONCE AGAIN
CORRODED. WILL DISPOSE. AGAIN UNHARMED DESPITE APPARENT TOXICITY.
WILL RUN AUTOANALYSIS PROTOCOLS.

MUST REMEMBER. FAILURE IS PROGRESS. PERSISTENCE IS SUCCESS. FOURTH
ATTEMPT TO COMMENCE UPON ACQUISITION OF SPECIMENS...

-THE ENTOMANCER

THE ENTOMANCER

Devran Saar has ever been obsessed with life in all its forms. From microbiological organisms and bacteria to massive reptilian and mammalian herd creatures and everything between them. His fascination with life, coupled with his Adeptus Mechanicus background, swiftly led to his ascension to Magos Biologis and his appointment within the Explorator Fleets. It was this self-same fascination that has led to his current predicament.

Trapped on an alien world, cut off from the Imperium, and surrounded on all sides by disease-ridden warmongers and undying soldiers fixated with poisoning the world, his mind snapped and his fascination became obsession. Now consumed with studying the countless denizens of the Living Seas, he conducts a campaign of subjugation against the nearby Pox Tribes, forcing them into acquiring species for him to study and transforming them into unthinking automata when they fail.

Long past the point of sanity or redemption, the Entomancer now resembles an upright insect himself. His once precious Mechanicus Implants have distorted into prehensile sensory organs, twitching mandibles, multifaceted lenses, and grotesque wings. His movements, once deliberate and focused, have become the nervous, blinking tics of a hunting insect. Still his mind strives to complete his work and every day leads to a new catalogue entry in his ever-expanding library, even as what remains of his humanity slips away into an inevitable series of impulses and nervous tics.

The Entomancer (Master)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
48	52	47	56	27	62	59	28	22	25

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Armour: Implants (5 All)

Skills: Awareness (Per), Command (Fel), Common

Lore (Int) (Adeptus Mechanicus, Tech) +20,

Common Lore (Screaming Vortex),

Deceive (Fel), Forbidden Lore (Int)

(Adeptus Mechanicus, Mutants) +20,

Forbidden Lore (Int) (Daemonology,

The Warp, Xenos), Inquiry (Fel) +10,

Interrogation (WP) +20, Linguistics

(Int), Logic (Int) +20, Medicae (Int)

+20, Operate (Surface) (Ag), Parry (WS)

+10, Scholastic Lore (Int) (Beasts, Legend,

Pyurultide Life Forms) +20, Scholastic Lore (Int)

(Chymistry, Occult), Scrutiny (Per), Security

(Int) +10, Survival (Per) +10, Tech-Use (Int)

+20, Trade (Explorator) +20.

Wounds: 29

Total TB: 7

Talents: Ambidextrous, Baleful Dirge, Cold Hearted, Die Hard, Disturbing Voice, Ferric Summons, Independent Targeting, Iron Jaw, Jaded, Luminen Blast, Luminen Shock, Master Surgeon, Mechadendrite Use (Utility, Weapon), Prosanguine, Technical Knock, Two Weapon Wielder (Ballistic), Weapon Tech, Weapon Training (Bolt, Las, Plasma, Primary, Power, Shock).

Traits: Mechanicus Implants, Master of the Machine Hive†, Unnatural Toughness (2).

†**Master of the Machine Hive:** As a Full Action, the Entomancer can fall forth swarms of seething technosites that drain the energy from machines and corrode all technology. For the next 1d5 Rounds, the Ranged weapons of each enemy within 49 metres Jam on Ballistic Skill Test result that contains a 7 (in addition to the usual values for which they would Jam). Weapons that Jam this way become corroded, and cannot be used until repaired with a **Hard (-20) Tech-Use Test** that requires 1d5 Rounds to complete.

Weapons: Ballistic Mechadendrite (Bolt) (Pistol; 15m; S/2/-; 1d10+4 X; Pen: 4; Clip: 4; Rld: Full; Tearing), Plasma Pistol (Pistol; 40m; S/2/-; 1d10+7 E; Pen: 8; Clip: 10; Rld: 3 Full; Maximal; Overheats), Venomous Power Axe (Melee; 1d10+11 E; Pen: 6; Power Field; Unbalanced; Toxic [7]).

Gear: Ballistic Mechadendrite (Bolt), Bionic Respiratory System, Black Blood, Blade Tines, Good Quality Cybernetic Eyes, Ferric Lure Implants, Luminen Capacitor, Manipulator Mechadendrite, Medicae Mechadendrite, Optical Mechadendrite, Utility Mechadendrite.

GUELPH

"Though this planet gave us new life, our true home is kept from us."

—Adrius Meinloka, The Pit-Lord of Guelph

Thrown across the Antecidual entries to the Vortex and past the haunting grounds of the Kasserkratch lies the orb of poison known as Guelph. Wreathed in clouds of corrosive, toxic gas, Guelph is known for two things: its massive network of forges and laboratories, and the extremely callous nature of its people. Life on the planet's surface is one of survival for natives and non-natives alike. There are very few food resources and the general population would just as soon kill another person than have to deal with him. It was not always this way, however.

BROKEN APART

Guelph and Ghibelline once shared a beautiful existence among the Halo Stars. Sharing an unusual dual orbit, the twin planets were almost exact mirror images of each other and were ruled by the Meinloka Clan. In order to keep all matters of rule uniform, Lord and Lady Meinloka separated themselves and their family so that in the event of difficulty, the family line would always be present in some fashion on each planet. Both planets flourished under their rule until the cosmic birth of Slaanesh tore it apart.

Unlike its twin, Ghibelline, the birth of the Screaming Vortex did not leave Guelph a beautiful landscape. Thrown further into the swirling energies of the Warp, Guelph lost more of its share of the solar energy as it travelled further into the storm and became a cold, dark planet, with much of its surface becoming uninhabitable. Snaring additional planetary mass from other systems as it flew by, Guelph's system grew into an amalgam of roughly seventeen different planetary bodies. As a result, the planet's stability was also more fragile with the infusion of so many random terrestrial bodies pulling on it as well as the massive amounts of Warp energy flowing through and around it. Massive earthquakes rocked many of the hive cities that survived the initial transition, leaving little more than piles of rubble in their wake. Volcanic activity churned up enough ash to blanket the secondary capital of Kimigstad, encasing it for eternity. The few histories that remain of that time indicate that within a matter of a few years, Folgrat was the only settlement left capable of sustaining life, and even Folgrat had its woes.

Soon after Kimigstad was entombed, the ground beneath Folgrat swallowed it up in a massive sinkhole, deep enough to prevent ready access to the surface but still able to see the night sky. Though little damage was done to the city, they were cut off from the already meagre food supplies they had. Desperate to save what remained of his people, Lord Meinloka rounded all of them up and, using the last measures of their once-proud fleet, they left the planet in search of their twin, hoping beyond hope that Ghibelline had been spared.

GHIBELLINE'S REBUKE

The journey back to Ghibelline was not without peril. Limited supplies meant that food and medicine were rationed through the entire trip. During this time, Lord Meinloka came to rely on his advisors heavily, one being Marchesa Ammarx,

his personal aide and confidant. She provided the voice of Meinloka when the Lord was otherwise occupied and helped ease the pain of austere living conditions for the majority of the remaining population. She was also the single most desirable woman in the fleet, and rarely left Lord Meinloka's side unless ordered. Fifteen months in transit brought the Guelphan fleet into the Ghibelline system, finding their sister world lush, green, and largely unscathed. Lord and Lady hailed each other for the first time in almost a decade and the populations of both worlds rejoiced as they were reunited.

Upon their arrival in orbit, Lord Meinloka took the first shuttle with his heirs to visit the planet, leaving Marchesa in charge of the fleet. The Meinloka Clan gathered, with the Ghibelline side resplendent in silks and brocade and the Guelphan side in haggard cloth and piecemeal armour. For hours they shared their stories and mourned their losses, ecstatic to once again be a unified family. They vowed to begin discussing plans to reintegrate the two peoples at once—but all that changed when Marchesa arrived on the planet.

Though no one has ever discovered why, no sooner had Marchesa Ammarx joined the discussion than Lady Meinloka reversed her decision and ordered that the Guelph leave Ghibelline immediately. Lord Meinloka begged and pleaded, but she turned her back on him and left the throne room without a further word. Stunned and furious, the Guelph king bade his entourage follow and stormed back to his dropship. Meinloka advised his people that his Lady had rebuked them all and that they were now cast out. He ordered all ships to prepare for departure with one stop – a refuelling station orbiting the planet. The Guelph fleet bore down on the station and in short order, raided it for supplies and then scuttled it, sending flaming pieces of it down to the surface with a final message: "We will return for our home." It was the final time any of the Guelph set foot on the planet in peace.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF WARPSMITHS

Transition to the Warp brought haunting dreams to the travellers. Surviving diaries from the crew and civilian population indicate that the dreams were persistent even into waking life. People wandered the ship in the throes of nightmares, though none showed any signs of physical malady. Those affected were quarantined early, but it still spread until all people not affiliated with the military or the fleet were in medical lockdown. Unsure of how to remedy the situation, Lord Meinloka pushed forward with all haste, hoping that there might be some measure of hope back on Guelph.

As the fleet burst back into realspace in the Guelph system, they noticed that much was different. New satellites and orbital stations orbited Guelph and her moons, and hailing calls flooded the bridge. Meinloka was stunned. Guelph had been taken in his absence. He and his people had no home. Answering the hails, he demanded to know who had taken his planet and ordered them to prepare for war if they did not abandon the system. A single face replied to Lord Meinloka's demands, one bearing the armour of a Space Marine. He called himself Jal Khalid and offered aid from his troops, though the Guelph would need to remain in orbit until the nature of the illness was determined. Knowing he would not be able to fight effectively with the entire population of his planet in harm's way, Meinloka acquiesced.

The Brotherhood of Warpsmiths, as the Space Marines called themselves, were sure they knew the root cause of the illness, for it had affected them too, albeit differently. Jal Khalid never divulged how it had affected his men, but their certainty was what Meinloka needed to convince to his people. There was hope of a new life and a future on Guelph for the first time since the birth of the Vortex. Though the initial trials were unsuccessful, the Brotherhood and Meinloka's remaining people worked diligently for months and, at the end of the seventh month, discovered a treatment distilled from the blood of both groups. Meinloka inoculated himself first and then began to administer it to all those who remained in the thrall of the illness. One by one, the Guelph began to awaken and regain awareness. Meinloka pledged Jal Khalid and the Brotherhood their loyalty. In response, Jal made a bold request: the ruins of Kimigstad, and one half of the other planets in the system, to use as research and construction bases. Meinloka readily agreed, adding that they would aid in the production of the Warpsmiths' forges as long as they would help prepare him for the final war with Ghibelline. Jal Khalid was also eager to enter the pact, stating that they would need a "testing ground for their creations." Once the people of Guelph were cured, Meinloka and Khalid finally met face to face.

Forges sprouted up like weeds throughout the system. Excavation sites dotted the surface of every moon or planet Jal Khalid and his troops touched. Soon, these massive excavations became such a commonplace sight within the Guelph system that Meinloka became known as the Pit-Lord of Guelph. Between the highly motivated population of Guelph and the advanced technology and sorcery of the Brotherhood, plans for the conquest of Ghibelline took form and moved forward at a rapid pace. Within a handful of months, Kimigstad had been uncovered and rebuilt as the main forge for the Brotherhood. Within a year, the Guelph Fleet had been upgraded and enlarged. At the end of five years, the Brotherhood had an arsenal of devastating Daemon Engines, as well as an elite guard of Obliterators, that they were willing to lend to the Pit-Lord. The time to reignite the fires of war had come.



Obliterator (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
38	54	50	55	23	36	39	48	10	14

Move: 3/6/9/18

Armour: Fleshmetal (14 All)

Skills: Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Archeotech, Daemonology, Traitor Legions, Warp) (Int), Intimidate (S), Tech Use (Int) +20.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Bolter Drill, Combat Sense, Deadeye Shot, Heavy Weapon Training, Independent Targeting, Legion Weapon Training, Storm of Iron, Target Selection, Technical Knock, Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic).

Traits: Auto-stabilized, Daemonic (2), Fear (2), From Beyond, Living Armoury, Size (5), Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (5), Unnatural Toughness (5), Violent Metamorphosis†.

Weapons: See **Violent Metamorphosis**.

Wounds: 44

Total TB: 12

†**Violent Metamorphosis:** Obliterators can form a number of weapons from the raw mass of their Warp-infused bodies. Obliterators manifest two weapons of varying degrees of lethality at any given time, chosen from the list below. As a Half Action, an Obliterator can reform one of his current weapons into any other weapon from the list. The GM can also feel free to have him adopt other weapons as appropriate. Standard Obliterator options are as follows:

- Reaper Autocannon (Heavy; 300; S/4/-; 3d10+8 I; Pen 6; Clip:—; Reliable, Twin-Linked).
- Multi-melta (Heavy; 60m; S/-/-; 2d10+16 E; Pen 12; Clip: —; Blast [1], Melta) .
- Plasma Cannon (Heavy; 150m; S/-/-, 2d10+12 E; Pen 10; Clip:—; Blast [3], Maximal, Overheats).
- Twin-Linked Legion Plasma Gun (Basic; 100m; S/2/-; 1d10+12 E; Pen 10; Maximal, Overheats, Twin-Linked).
- Twin-Linked Legion Meltagun (Basic; 20m; S/-/-; 2d10+13 E; Pen 12; Clip:—; Melta, Twin-Linked).
- Legion Combi-Bolter (Basic; 80m; S/3/-; 1d10+9 X; Pen 4; Clip: —; Tearing, Twin-Linked).
- Power Fist (Legion) (Melee; 2d10+10 E; Pen 9; Power Field, Unwieldy).

Living Armoury: Obliterators consume ammunition and fuel for sustenance, and are thusly capable of generating massive amounts of firepower without a need to reload. The Obliterator's weapons never need to be reloaded.

THE WAR OF IDEALS AND THE TRIALS AT GNOSI

The Pit-Lord called for war and was met with the thunderous approval of his people. They had been slighted and cast away from family and home without reason or provocation. Fully half of the capable population volunteered to fight for their honour and boarded the ships bound for their sister planet. Though there are many accounts of the individual battles, there is very little dispute about how the war began. The Pit-Lord and the Brotherhood descended on the outlying planets of the Ghibelline system with the fury of an entire race behind them. As they subjugated these planets and moons, they rendered them wholly subservient to the Pit-Lord's tactical needs, becoming the supply chain for the effort. The campaign made haste to Ghibelline proper, for the Pit-Lord knew that only by removing his former wife, and those family members loyal to her, would he be able to lay claim to his rightful home.

Upon reaching the capital planet, the rules changed. Ghibelline had come into possession of strange new weapons and engines of war; weapons that overloaded the senses, destroyed physical matter with sound, and turned the Guelph soldiers into puppets of

the Ghibellines began to shatter the Guelph lines. Though the Guelph arsenal was more powerful, it required human elements, which were capable of being turned against their own. The Pit-Lord, sensing that the tide could turn, led an assault on the palace to remove his disloyal family from power. His initial attack breached the palace walls, only to find that Lady Meinloka lay in wait for him. Many say that he was betrayed from within, but the Ghibellines claim that it was superior force of arms that allowed them to capture the Pit-Lord and remove him to the remote island nation of Gnosi.

Gnosi was the Ghibelline's most secret research facility. For a month they tortured the Pit-Lord, hoping to wear him down and force him to surrender. They killed his retinue one by one in front of him and subjected him to many of their new weapons, but he never gave them what they wanted. For the month he was in Gnosi, the war continued to grind on, with Ghibelline starting to gain the upper hand. In her final visit to her former husband, Empress Meinloka had the Pit-Lord watch the destruction of the Brotherhood's most devastating creations and the troops that supported him, taunting him with his inability to aid them. But the Pit-Lord was not watching. Recovered memoirs of the jailors of Gnosi reveal that the prisoner seemed to be in silent prayer, muttering to himself and conversing with some unseen force. Perhaps he had gone mad in those moments, but the Pit-Lord slowly raised his head and bellowed "I ACCEPT!" at the top of his lungs. In that moment, Ghibelline's fortunes changed.

In the blink of an eye, the warriors of Guelph began to change. Their senses dulled, they broke free of the bewitching scents and sounds of the Ghibelline troops. Their bodies became resilient to the blows being landed upon them. Daemon Engines that had been crushed were infused with new energy and reformed into hideous, pox-laden monstrosities.

The Ghibellines, wholly unprepared to deal with enemies that couldn't feel pain and war machines that spat poison and plague across their ranks, began to fall back. In Gnosi, the Pit-Lord grew in size and stature, breaking his bindings and becoming an ogre of a man. Smashing his captors aside, he set about freeing the few of his troops that remained. They too were invigorated, and began to make their way toward the surface, killing everyone in their path.





The accounts of that escape are largely untold, seeing as the Pit-Lord was the only one to survive. Though his people perished, the city-state of Gnosi was reduced to a smoking ruin when he left. The Brotherhood located him and ushered him to safety. Upon his return to the fleet, Jal Khalid informed him that the Brotherhood's craft had been outfitted with a full load of virus bombs. The Pit-Lord smiled and fired only once, upon the isle of Gnosi, before ordering the withdrawal of his troops. "We are patient...we are patient," were the only words he uttered as he walked from the command bridge. The War of Ideals was over.

THE REALM OF THE PIT-LORD

With two massive hive cities and dozens of research facilities scattered around the planet's surface, Guelph is little more than the waste fields for the massive military industrial complex at the heart of the Pit-Lord's fiefdom. Toxic effluents flow across the surface of the planet, and the haze of poisonous gas is ever-present and smothering.

Guelph's two main hives remain much as they were at the time of the War of Ideals centuries ago. Though they have grown in size and stature, both have stayed true to their purpose. Folgrat is the seat of power and the main starport for the planet. The Pit-Lord's fortress, known as the Steel Citadel, sits in the dead centre, majestic and intimidating. Here, Adrius Meinloka still rules the Guelphans just as he has for as long as anyone can remember. He has outlived all of Jal Khalid's original host and been the sole human contact with

the Brotherhood throughout Guelph's current history. It is one of the largest hives in the Vortex, surrounded by toxic salt flats that glow and occasionally catch fire as waste products mix in heady chemical reactions. Most of the food consumed by the Guelphans comes from Folgrat, either as imports from other planets in the system or as vat-grown products known for their nutritional value but certainly not their flavour.

Kimigstad is run exclusively by the Brotherhood of Warpsmiths and, other than the Pit-Lord and selected members of his staff, none but the Warpsmiths and their creations enter or leave. Massive engines of destruction stand guard over the once ash-buried cityscape, and the forges burn night and day. The Brotherhood take customers from all over the Screaming Vortex, but keep their greatest works held out for their own use. Their modifications to other known designs have been found on battlefields throughout and are widely sought out. Though many would-be warlords would love to get their hands on the Brotherhood's engines, very few have the ability to pay for them.

Cold-hearted and callous, the people of Guelph are as unforgiving as the planet's surface. Unsympathetic eyes greet you from every angle in what is referred to by traders in the Vortex as the Guelphan Stare: eyes that pierce you and seem to swallow any ounce of joy from you alongside unchanging facial expressions that emanate bitterness and malice. Most who are not known to Guelph receive this cold welcome from most of the population, but it is not only unnerving looks you get from the Guelphans. Many who journey there seeking weapons and armour from one of the best forge planets in the Screaming Vortex have discovered first-hand that returning home alive is not always a certainty. Blood and death are frequent visitors to the streets of Folgrat, for often nothing more than a small slight. Needless to say, regular travellers to Guelph are few, and usually of an extremely hardy breed.

Guelph Citizen (Troop)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
37	29	39	43	29	35	32	37	35	--

Move: 2/4/6/12

Armour: Rotting mesh (4 All)

Skills: Awareness (Per), Common Lore (Guelph) (Int), Dodge (Ag), Intimidate (S), Survival (Per).

Talents: Betrayer, Cold-Hearted, Die Hard, Jaded, Nerves of Steel, Pity the Weak, Resistance (Poison, Disease, Shock), Shock Weapon Training, Solid Projectile Weapon Training.

Traits: Fear (1), Regeneration (1), Unnatural Toughness (2).

Weapons: Hand Cannon (Pistol; 35m; 1d10+4 I; Pen 2; S/-/-; Clip 5; Rld 2 Full), Electrified Bludgeon (Melee; 1d10+6; Pen 0; Shocking).

Gear: Two clips of ammo.

Wounds: 14

Total TB: 6

DAEMON ENGINES

Daemon Engines are a bizarre and frightening hybrid of mechanical ingenuity and arcane impossibility. Incorporating the pulsating rage of a Daemon requires strong bindings, powerful enticement or coercion, and blood sacrifice. Each construct acts as both prison and new body for the Daemon, bound into service by its new master. The Pit Lord's Warpsmiths on Guelph specialise in altering existing engine constructs to better serve the Great Corruptor. Foul science mixed with Warp-tainted energies change already terrifying war machines into sentient killing beasts. They are, however, far from the only ones who manufacture such creations. Regardless of which planet or faction makes them, all Daemon Engines trade the extended durability of a vehicle for the shock and awe factor of a creature of the Empyrean. Daemon Engines follow the rules below:

- Daemon Engines are sentient, and are thus presented in the same manner as living creatures.
- All Daemon Engines have the Daemon Engine Trait.
- Any bound crew members cannot be targeted as they are technically part of the construct.
- Some kinds of Daemon Engines are always Aligned to a specific Chaos God, while others can be Aligned to any Ruinous Power. The GM should feel free to give any Daemon Engine one or more additional Daemon Engine Traits (such as those found in **Daemon Engine Traits** or on pages 51–55 of this volume) that match its Alignment.



As its cage suffers damage, the bindings unravel, and the Daemon is able to taste the material world on its own again. Should the Daemon break entirely free, it will rage across the battlefield, smiting anything in its path. Whenever a Daemon Engine suffers Critical Damage, consult **Table 3–9: Daemonic Engine Critical Hit Chart** below to see the extent of the damage to the internal systems and other effects.

TABLE 3–9: DAEMONIC ENGINE CRITICAL HIT CHART

Damage Points	Result
1–3	Distracting Blow: The Daemon is momentarily enraged by actually being touched by the weapons of an enemy that it must make a Challenging (+0) Willpower Test to resist targeting the source of that attack with its next attack. If it was already focused on this target, then it moves with all haste to fully engage that target with any and all weapons at its disposal.
4–6	Ablative Strike: The attack strips layers of armour off the engine as well as some of the protective runes. Reduce the armour by 1d10 points. In addition, any future Critical Hits receive a bonus of +2 on this chart. This is a cumulative bonus should multiple Ablative Strikes hit the Daemon Engine. Roll 1d10. On a roll of 9 or 10, any Daemonic Shield (Cloud of Flies, for example) is sufficiently ruined and no longer provides protection.
7–8	Weapon Damaged: Randomly select a weapon on the engine. That weapon bears the brunt of the attack and takes the full effects of the blow. While not quite as resilient as Titan weapons, the Daemon will try to preserve its integrity. Roll 1d10, and on a roll of 7 or more, the weapon can be used the next round. On a roll of anything less, the weapon is inoperable until repaired outside of the battle.
9	Penetrating Hit: A powerful attack breaches the construct's structure and allows the Daemon to taste the material world directly. Reduce the armour by 1d10 points and roll an additional 2d10 points of Damage. The attack also breached the hull in some capacity; roll a further 1d10. On a result of 9 or 10, the Daemon Engine suffers a Daemon Unbound! Result.
10+	Daemon Unbound!: The attack is strong enough that the bindings are completely undone and the construct is unable to contain the Daemon. For all game purposes, the engine vaporizes as the Daemon manifests fully in the material world. The sudden release of Warp energy causes an explosion with a 2d10 x 10 metre radius, leaving a crater in its place. Anyone caught within the blast radius suffers 5d10+10 Energy Damage ignoring Armour that is not warded against psychic abilities. Reduce the Damage by 2 points for every full 10 metres the target is away from the epicentre. Alternatively, at the GM's discretion, the blast damage can be reduced to 2d10+5 Energy Damage and the Daemon can manifest, freed from its shackles. It might offer the players thanks or engage them in combat, depending on the Alignment of the Daemon, the Heretics and NPCs involved, and the adventure.

DAEMON ENGINE TRAITS

Daemonforge: Once per encounter, the Daemon Engine may re-roll a Damage roll in its entirety. If any of the re-rolled dice result in a 9 or 10, the Daemon Engine suffers 1d5 Wounds (ignoring armour and Toughness Bonus) for each of those results.

Daemon Engine (X): The creature is a hybrid of Daemon and machine, fusing technology and sorcery in a way that is seamless and horrifying. A Daemon Engine has the From Beyond and The Stuff of Nightmares Traits, and is therefore immune to Fear, Pinning, Stunning, Insanity, Poison, and Disease. Psychic Powers that affect the mind cannot control the Engine as it is bound to the sorcerous runes holding the construct together. In addition, Daemon Engines increase their Toughness Bonus by an amount equal to the number in parentheses. Psychic Powers and weapons with the Blessed, Force, or Sanctified Quality ignore this additional Toughness Bonus.

NURGLE DAEMON ENGINE TRAITS

Cloud of Flies: Surrounding the engine is a visible and tangible aura made of maggot-flies, poisonous wasps, and corpse locusts. Ranged Attacks against this Daemon Engine suffer a -10 penalty. This is a Daemonic Shield.

Hideous Visage: Increase the value of this Daemon Engine's Fear Trait by +1.

Pestilent Fog: Mists of putrescence surround and follow the engine in its wake, causing slow death to those who inhale the fumes. Any living creature not protected by an environmental seal that begins its Turn within 15m of the engine must make a **Hard (-20) Toughness Test** or suffer 1d5 Toughness Damage.

FORGEFIENDS AND MAULERFIENDS

Emerging from the twisted minds and arcane forges of innumerable Warpsmiths, Daemon Engines of all types are rightfully feared and admired by all would-be warlords and rulers in the Screaming Vortex. Among the most prized are the Forgefiends and Maulerfiends, dangerously tough and compact constructs capable of rending hard and soft targets alike with little difficulty. Infused with the rage of an angered Daemon, and given the tools to wreak havoc on the living, these creatures are difficult to create and even harder to destroy.

Forgefiends are imbued with the direct power of the Immaterium, manifesting as white-hot, large-bore ammunition rounds tinged with daemonic residue or balls of plasma seething with the raw essence of the Warp. These foul creatures move across the battlefield, searching for any enemy troops or light vehicles they can raze and consume, stopping only rarely to gorge itself or refuel. Though most versions of these constructs have only two weapons where the primary limbs would normally be, newer variants have been seen with a third weapon mount in the head. These variants, often called Cerberites, have proven to be exceptionally adept at clearing out pockets of resistance, and as such are in high demand.

Maulerfiends are designed slightly differently than their cousins. Made for assaulting fortifications and heavily armoured targets, Maulerfiends are given massive power fists capable of punching holes in even the thickest plating available. Along with that are twin magma cutters; high powered but extremely short range armour-breaching implements capable of cutting a light tank or transport in half with little effort. These beasts move quickly across battlefields, actively seeking emplacements or heavy armour while remaining entirely oblivious to barricades and rubble. When they engage a bunker or a unit of armoured vehicles, the Maulerfiend crushes its prey first and if that doesn't crack the shell, it burns its way in. Some variants trade the magma cutters for two sets of mecadendrite-like tentacles used to prevent assaults by walkers or heavy infantry. These so-called "Lasherfiends" have proven to be extremely useful on planets where the opposing force's greatest asset is a zealous militia force willing to sacrifice their lives for their home.

Forgefiend/Maulerfiend									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
35	38	54	56	28	31	42	48	01	--

Move: 10/20/30/60

Wounds: 45

Armour: Machine (16 All)

Total TB: 12

Skills: Awareness.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Independent Targeting, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee, Ranged).

Traits: Daemonforge, Daemon Engine (7), Fear (3), Machine (16), Quadruped, Size (7), Unnatural Strength (6).

Weapons:

Forgefiend Options (choose one):

- 2 Ectoplasma Cannons (Heavy; 200m; S/-/-; 3d10 E; Pen 10; Blast [3], Devastating [3], Overheats).
- 2 Hades Autocannons (Heavy; 300m; 3/6/12; 3d10+8 I; Pen 6; Devastating [4], Storm).

Maulerfiend Options (choose one):

- 2 Power Fists (Melee; 2d10+11 E; Pen 9; Power Field, Unwieldy) and Magma Cutters (the Maulerfiend's melee attacks inflict an additional 1d10 Damage and gain the Flame Quality).
- 2 Power Fists (Melee; 2d10+11 E; Pen 9; Power Field, Unwieldy) and Lasher Tendrils (whenever an attack would inflict more than one hit on the Maulerfiend, it inflicts only the first hit instead; any hits beyond the first are negated).



PLAGUE TOWERS

While many warlords prefer to lay waste to a planet from orbit, some prefer to make an example of their conquests. Disciples of Khorne and Nurgle usually follow this path, and while Khorne usually prefers large-scale battlefields where blood flows freely and skulls are piled, Nurgle's followers have a unique reputation for laying siege to a population where it thinks it is safest. At the height of these sieges, Plague Towers are an all-too common sight; looming, rolling battle-towers from a long-dead age, covered in flayed human skin, and carrying disease and filth. Created from a massive pustule summoned by sorcerers or Warpsmiths upon their arrival, these hulking creations are filled with the gifts of Nurgle, ready to be bestowed upon new hosts.

Armed with two conventional wall-breaching Demolisher Cannons, the plague tower has little difficulty shattering a city's defences. The two unique weapons, the Bile Cannon and Plague Mortar, however, are the key elements to the success of this device. The Plague Mortar lobbs shells tainted with contagion as it rolls toward its target, sowing slow death among the population that is not killed outright. The Bile Cannon is designed to rid the initial breach of defenders by blasting them with a foul stream of pus and ichor. Those not instantly killed are covered in oozing rashes and sores as the corrosive liquid works its way through armour. The towers also serve as transports for large numbers of crazed followers. It is no wonder that these hulking engines of war are often seen as harbingers of a grisly end.

Plague Tower (Master)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
25	52	34	52	34	34	25	34	01	--

Move: 8/16/24/48

Wounds: 56

Armour: Machine (35 All)

Total TB: 15

Skills: Awareness.

Talents: Independent Targeting.

Traits: Assault Ramps†, Cloud of Flies, , Daemon Engine (10) Fear (3), Hideous Visage, Machine (35), Nurgle's Blessing††, Pestilent Fog, Size (9), Unnatural Strength (3).

Weapons: Bile cannon (Heavy; Front Arc; 100m; 2d10+7 I; Pen 7; Devastating [8], Spray, Toxic [3]), two Demolisher Cannons (Heavy; Front Arc; 200m; S/-/-; 3d10+10 X; Pen 8; Blast [8], Devastating [4]), Plague Mortar (Heavy, 750m; 2d10+6 I; Pen 7; Blast [10], Concussive [2], Devastating [5], Inaccurate, Recharge, Toxic [3]).

†**Assault Ramps:** These ramps allow insane followers of the Great Corruptor or his Daemonic minions to mount an assault on the walls of a fortress or city. When a Plague Tower moves into effective assault range of a fortification, the ramps drop to disgorge its passengers. The Plague Tower is capable of holding up to 50 occupants with a Size Trait of 5 or lower.

††**Nurgle's Blessing:** A Plague Tower is a Daemon Engine of Nurgle, and is always Aligned to Nurgle.



THE WRITHING WORLD

"There are multifarious stimuli constantly at work upon the mortal soul. There is rage, passion, love, hate, revenge, curiosity, hope. And the strongest of these, of course, is hope."

—Eructacus Foetor, Shikari Catechist
of the Pinguid Panglossia

Approaching the celestial body referred to in most charts and texts simply as the Writhing World, one experiences a transformative awakening that continues right down to the planet's surface. From a great distance, the Writhing World appears little different from any of the other planets locked within the clutches of the Screaming Vortex. In fact, from extreme visual ranges, the planet possesses a strange, factitious beauty. The swirling tans and browns of the planet's surface are reminiscent of a shimmering sand globe, while floating gracefully above the planet are undulant clouds of black, eddying in the upper atmosphere. An iridescent ring surrounds the whole, playing host to four verdant moons that hang like glowing emeralds upon a golden chain. But as one moves closer, reality opens up like a wonderful, blooming corpse flower.

The first dissonant note a first-time visitor to the Writhing World will note is the composition of the vast, sweeping ring that surrounds the planet. Upon closer inspection, the ring is not, in fact, composed of dust and stone, as one would expect in the sidereal universe. Rather, each chunk of matter fixed within the band is a complicated knot of fey, wriggling meat. Tendrils and flesh undulate to undetectable currents. From the largest asteroids to the tiniest, glittering motes floating around the world, each thrashes softly in a bizarre simulacrum of life.

The four beautiful moons orbiting around the Writhing World pose the most interesting mystery within the system, in their sheer normalcy. The flora and fauna on each are primitive in their development and sophistication, but they nevertheless present a viridian splendour when set against the pale, dun coloured world they orbit. Each glitters with vibrancy, the sparkling jade of a bottle-fly's eye. And each contains untold mysteries that link it to the glistening umber globe below.

As a Heretic breaks atmosphere into the realm of the Writhing World, he will find navigation and flight difficult as the air, nearly solid with the fusty stench of rot, buffets their craft with the capricious violence of a mischievous child. Any attempt to breathe this air without filtration or assistance is to experience the decomposition of an entire planet beneath ones feet. The impression is only reinforced as one looks out over the slowly undulating landscape of this foully-glorious world.

The surface of the Writhing World is formed by an array of fleshy tubules that present in a wide range of sizes. The Great Tendrils are massive, continent-sized masses of rippling flesh, stretching off into the distance. On a more standard planet, these fleshy monoliths play the role of bedrock, mountains, and rolling plains. The flesh that composes them, moving in slow, deliberate rolls, spans the corporeal rainbow from flushed health to gangrenous decay as the entire planet experiences the grand ballet of life, death, decay, and rebirth.

Providing the finer details of the landscape of the Writhing World are the Lesser Tendrils. Ranging from trunks the girth of a corpulent man to hair-fine shoots that seem to shift in a breeze no man can feel, the Lesser Tendrils show more life than their

Greater brethren, standing in for grass, trees, and undergrowth. These lashing whips of meat are far more lively than the Greater Tendrils, often presenting an insidious danger to visitors to the strange planet with their sudden, muscular convulsions.

Most inhabited planets in the sidereal universe are veritably covered in water features, and the Writhing World is no exception. Glistening lakes, rivers, and seas gleam from orbit, giving the planet a wet, shining appearance. Where another world might run with clear, fresh water, however, this mysterious orb drips with bile, phlegm, pus, and other intriguing biological solutions. Each body of water contains a veritable soup of happy microbotica that presents untold dangers to any lost soul unlucky enough to bathe within the waters. Tales persist among the servants of the Father of Plagues, however, that one truly chosen by Grandfather Nurgle, and blessed with his bounty, might immerse himself beneath the viscous substances and receive untold rewards from their infernal patron.

Due to the constantly shifting nature of the very bedrock of the planet, instability is the only constant. Nothing is certain. The Great Tendrils are constantly on the move, causing disturbing quakes that can destroy the works of man in the blink of an eye. When those tendrils deep beneath a lake or sea shift enough, the contents may drain out, only to emerge at some other point along the planet's surface. Countless aquatic vermin are stranded in a moment upon vast plains of drying flesh, while land-born murine drown half a world away. These moments of upheaval and destruction are referred to as Convulsions, and can occasionally wreak drastic change upon the entire surface of the planet and among the creatures and heretics that call the Writhing World their home.

Of the countless mysteries and enigmas that surround this twisting sphere, possibly the most fascinating is the question of what lurks beneath the churning surface? There are many theories as to what lies at the heart of planet. Countless expeditions have been launched through the millennia, with an impressive roll of the most notable Heretics of the Screaming Vortex gauging their way through the countless layers of quivering flesh. No one has ever returned to the surface with indisputable proof of what lies at the centre of the orb of rotting, squirming meat. This lack of evidence, however, has only fuelled the rampant speculation.

The majority of those who speculate on the nature of the planet maintain that the world consists of nothing but layer after layer of flesh; a snarled tangle of squirming tendrils, pseudopods, and ganglia. If this is the case, it is probable that those tendrils closest to the core are dying or dead, pushed under by their more vibrant brothers. This theory easily explains the pungent, sweet scent of decay that pervades the entire planet while the vermin of the planet and the tendrils on the surface feast on the dead flesh, growing fat and indolent on the easy fare.

Darker tales whisper of an entire civilization lying crushed beneath the flesh, patiently awaiting an intrepid champion who will tear a bloody hole in the planet to discover its ancient secrets. If, indeed, the ruins of a primeval society lie within the embrace of the Writhing World, it might well be the bodies of the countless millions that contribute their feculent flesh to the fetor that greets visitors, feeding the lazy creatures of the world.



The darkest legends talk of the birth of a great being, a Greater Daemon or a Daemon Prince, perhaps. The myths surrounding this belief are varied and contradictory. Some say the planet was forever altered at the moment of Apotheosis. Others that the planet is a living creature, summoned into existence to devour the remains of the godling's birth. The vilest tales of the Sorcerer-Kings and Biomancer Lords imagine the blessed entity itself, in the moment of its unholy ascension, being cast into the ultimate curse of cosmic spawndom for some horrific failing, becoming the very planet itself.

Any of these tales could explain away the ecology of the planet and the stench of the atmosphere, but all leave even darker mysteries as to what might be found at the planet's core. What is not in contention, however, is the veritable explosion of life that crawls across the surface and swarms in the skies overhead.

The surface of the Writhing World teems with the full array of vermin and carrion eaters one would expect feasting upon a ripe and bloated corpse, albeit versions too massive and grotesque to be accurately described with words alone. Enormous beetle-creatures push their way across the cilia plains, grazing upon the wriggling flesh with mandibles sharp enough to cut through the body of a fully-armed Renegade. Swift, scythe-legged Magna-Lice haunt the tendril forests, feeding off the flushed meat of the planet's surface as well as any vermin or human they are able to run down. Crevasses and wrinkles are filled with the writhing larvae of the planet's most famous denizens, the giant bottle flies that make up the Great Swarms swirling across the sky.

Haunting the shadowed depths of the bile seas are enormous, sleek-bodied creatures that skim through the gelatinous fluid, propelled along with the graceful, sweeping motions of their bladed limbs. These insectile behemoths, often the size of void-fighters, are rarely seen as they lurk within the deepest, most dense folds of the seabed. However, the native huskmens of the Writhing World have learned caution when crossing these bodies of oily liquid, lest their callous-boats be overturned, and they find themselves dragged down into the tepid depths.

Life upon this fascinating planet is vibrant and full of energy as the chaotic whirlwind of the eternal cycle sweeps across the globe. Newly-hatched herd-maggots pour across the land, pushing the older corpse-beetles aside, feeding on the rancid flesh of the landscape before erupting into the sky, carrying, perhaps, a fragment of a thought, a curl of meaning, into the surging clouds overhead.

Giant bottle flies, each the size of a man's head, form swarms that stretch for miles and miles into the noisome atmosphere. The low, droning hum of millions upon millions of translucent wings is an ever-present reality to anyone walking the surface of the planet. These creatures, once they leave the shells of their pupal stage and take to the heavy air for the first time, never set claws to fleshy earth again. They remain airborne, a member of the semi-sentient colony mind, until their shrivelled, desiccated body flutters down to join the other detritus littering the landscape, serving to feed the next generation of vermin surging towards the light.

There are many heretics in the Screaming Vortex that believe the swirling, graceful fly-clouds contain a small portion of Grandfather Nurgle's consciousness, or serve as a conduit to that Ruinous Power's thoughts and intentions. They swarm and boil across the planet forming huge patterns that seem maddeningly close to making some sort of sense before the patterns explode into chaos again. No concrete evidence has ever been presented that there is, in fact, any meaning behind the whirling ballet of giant insects, but this lack of surety only serves to spur those desperate enough to seek such contact. Each year, countless men and women descend upon the Writhing World for the sole purpose of gazing upon the clouds and teasing out their possible meaning.

Among the many strange and wondrous creatures that call the Writhing World their home, a hardy breed of humans has existed for as long as the planet has existed within the Vortex. These savage, nomadic tribesmen use the exoskeletons of the vermin for armour, utensils, and anything else they might need. Clothed in the castoff skins of the bloated cadaver wyrms, huskmen tribes are constantly at war with each other over the best hunting grounds, breeding stock, and gelid ponds.

With the flesh of the planet itself as a constant source of nourishment, and the phlegmy liquids of the seas, lakes, and streams a ready supply of water, the huskmen tend to be obese and slow. However, the Writhing World, the very embodiment of death, decay, and explosive rejuvenation, is a seething hotbed of disease and infection. Due in large part to the inherent virulence of their environment, weak huskmen tend to die early, while the strong and tough survive. Through this gradual process of selection and culling, huskmen have become some of the toughest humans in the Screaming Vortex.

There is another type of human that calls the Writhing World its home. Lords of the planet and masters of the huskmen tribes and even the Sorcerer-Kings who stand above the huskmen, the Biomancers are strangers who come to the Writhing World from all across the Vortex and beyond. These sorcerers of life and death find themselves inexorably pulled to the planet to master its lessons of flesh, change, and the hope for rebirth. Many keep to themselves, establishing small sanctuaries far from the tribes and other Biomancers, delving into the mysteries of the planet for a time before moving on. Others, however, develop a taste for the thick, feculent air in their lungs, the soft, pliant flesh beneath their feet, and the reassuring buzz of the fly clouds overhead. These powerful beings establish themselves upon the planet, bending entire regions to their whims with their hard-won powers, and playing with the lives of the huskmen like the toys of a wayward child.

THE CITIZENS OF THE CRAWLING CITADELS

The most infamous denizens of the Writhing World are not the pseudo-divinatory flies, the corpulent huskmen, or the vicious insectile vermin that roam the surface. The reputation and power of the sorcerers that find themselves drawn to the planet's burgeoning explosions of life have spread throughout the Vortex and beyond. Their mastery of the riddles of life and death is unquestioned, and they lord over this planet of flesh with merciless abandon.

These Biomancers venerate the myriad cycles of life. Teasing out the meaning and power within the intricate dance of birth, age, decrepitude, death, decay, and rebirth, are swiftly destroyed by their own research or rise to prominence among the most powerful beings of the Vortex. The most powerful Biomancers are capable of shaping the very flesh of the planet beneath them, and the creatures that crawl upon it. Able to twist living meat and bone to their every whim, Biomancers have the very threads of life at their mercy, spinning armour, weapons, and defences from the very vitae of their subjects.

The vast majority of the Biomancers living upon the Writhing World are not natives of the fleshy orb, but are rather tried and tested sorcerers in their own right. Many of these jovial men and women have followed the path of Grandfather Nurgle throughout the galaxy before finding themselves on this strange, living planet. These powerful masters of flesh and life are not often given to discussing their supremacy or their origins with outsiders, but there are many tales and legends that whisper of their ability to twist the flesh of their enemies against them, causing crippling pain, withering limbs and minds, and reducing even the most powerful warlords to mewling, twisted wrecks with a gesture of their hand.

Among these mysterious sorcerers, there are always four that hold the greatest share of power, lording over the planet even as they push the boundaries of their knowledge and abilities beyond the understanding of mortal men. Each of these Biomancer Lords command one of the four gem-like moons that spin through the kaleidoscopic swirl of the night sky. These planetoids serve as sanctuaries in times of great endeavour, retreats in the face of powerful opposition, and, some whisper, the very source of the paramount manifestation of their power.

There are four of these larger bodies, located within the spinning disk of the planet's squirming ring. These planetoids are more traditional in structure and composition than the planet below, or the ring of matter that connects them. Each is host to a riotous explosion of life reaching up into the tainted heavens only to fall back into the ever-boiling soup of the surface, corpulent and mouldering remains embraced and enveloped by the rising tide of new life.

There has been a great deal of speculation among the beings that concern themselves with such knowledge, as to the importance and power present within the moons of the Writhing World. Certainly, despite the vibrant life present on all of them, each is unnatural and twisted in its own way. Equally clear is that the Biomancer Lords ruling the world below hold their lunar fiefdoms as precious, spending a great deal of time secreted away within their strongholds. Not even whispers speak of what might occupy these lordly creatures in their mysterious lairs, but conjecture runs rampant throughout the Vortex.

Many secret-hunters believe that the truth of the Writhing World's genesis can be found buried beneath the surfaces of one moon or another. The possibility that each worldlet holds a piece of that ancient puzzle has not been lost on the treasure-seekers, either. Other theories speak of ancient sources of power, either sidereal or sorcerous, hidden within the ancient strongholds. Such sources of power would go far to explain the often sudden rise to power of Biomancer Lords when such a conversion occurs. True dreamers speculate that the largest secrets of these dread lords are to be found

somewhere on their orbiting citadels. Whether these answers might address the bloated fly clouds of the planet, or the creation and control of the infamous Crawling Citadels, or of mysteries even darker of nature, has never been resolved. All that is truly known is that the Biomancer Lords hold control of their moons with all the tightness of a death grip, and hold their secrets closely even unto death.

The most powerful of the current Biomancer Lords of the Writhing World is Adipose Rex, Lord of Lowenesse. Adipose Rex is a mammoth, gargantuan man whose portly, smiling face hides the coldly calculating mind of the master of the planet. Adipose Rex rules over the most fecund temperate zones of the northern hemisphere. Despite the impermanence of surface features on the planet, the general temperatures and weather patterns of this zone means that it is most often hospitable to both the huskmens and the panoply of vermin. The moon Lowenesse is a glossy jade ball whose steamy jungles and foetid swamps are aswarm with violent, thrashing life. The Palace of Surfeit, surrounded by swollen, over-ripe trees and the sweet stench of rotting fruit, is an ugly, squat structure built from brown-green native stone. Streaks of mould and moss add slashes of contrasting colours down the low walls.

Graven, the largest moon orbiting the Writhing World, is claimed by the longest-serving Biomancer Lord, Aefluvia Tamar, Lady of Graven. The moon is a swollen dark olive bulb with veins of feculent brown entwined across its surface. The Lady of Graven claims the temperate southern regions, only slightly less-hospitable than the domains of Lord Adipose. Lady Aefluvia's Castle Nimiety is located beneath the surface her moon, Graven, plunged down through the spongy crust and into the crumbling stone beneath. The atmosphere of Graven is the closest of all the moons to their parent planet's, the odour of decay and dissolution heavy in the air. Although no animal life is visible upon Graven, the spongy moss that covers the entire surface is home to slow-moving, vermiform leviathans who live their entire lives burrowing beneath the surface.

Cord Cantric, Lord of Daedelon, is easily the most destructive, violent, and aggressive of the Biomancer Lords. Lord Cantric claimed the equatorial region of the planet over one hundred years ago, and has not attempted to encroach upon the realms of either Adipose Rex or Lady Aefluvia in all that time. The warmest region of the planet is host to the most aggressive tribes of huskmens, and Lord Cantric has been known to test his creations by engineering massive conflicts among the tribes, and then introducing his creatures and diseases into their midst. The moon Daedelon is completely covered with murky, shallow water and high-reaching, spindly trees. Swarms of flies, smaller cousins to the giant specimens on the planet below, fill the air, fouling the intakes of craft that attempt to land, and making breathing a noxious chore. Cord Cantric's Fortress of Suffiar reaches out from the shadowy depths and plunges thin, spine-like towers into the lowering sky overhead.

The newest Biomancer Lord to rise to prominence upon the Writhing World was Yufreth of Tidec, Lord of Tabelar. Yufreth descended upon the planet alone and unarmed and was immediately accepted by Lord Huwaith Ouse of Tabelar as an apprentice. It is unknown why the recalcitrant old man

was so quick to bring an unknown newcomer into his retinue, but there is no disputing that fact. Yufreth assisted the old Biomancer Lord with several massive enterprises, including the construction and arming of a new, larger Crawling Citadel. Soon after the completion of the behemoth, however, Lord Huwaith disappeared. There were no rumours of a struggle of any kind, nor signs of battle or any other violence. Huwaith was gone, and Yufreth repaired to the old man's lunar sanctuary of De'trop on the mouldering wastes of the moon Tabelar. When he returned, he was the undisputed fourth Biomancer Lord, and ruler of the northern polar regions. Yufreth has not spoken to any outsiders since his rise to power, and has spent most of his time bringing the few tribes of huskmens acclimated to the cold of the north under his sway.

Although each Biomancer Lord maintains a seat of power upon his chosen moon, all Biomancer Lords spend the majority of their time upon the churning surface of their adopted home world. Each rules his own realm from the most magnificent specimens of the Writhing World's infamous Crawling Citadels. Although many lesser Biomancers have mastered the creation of these enormous creature-fortresses, the monstrous examples that house the Biomancer Lords are truly gargantuan and majestic in scope and power.

Biomanced from the flesh of the planet itself, melded with the genetic material of the vermin that inhabit the planet, the Crawling Citadels are like unto nothing seen elsewhere in the Screaming Vortex or beyond. Massive, lumbering constructs, six albino legs push the citadels along, putrescent palaces growing from their hunched, misshapen abdominal masses. The walls are composed of thick exo-skeletal chitin, also a pale, sickly white. Mounted upon these walls can be found a bewildering array of defensive weapons and preparations. Often, weaponry that would do a Titan proud can be found probing the shuddering landscape surrounding a Crawling Citadel on the move, procured through the offices of off-planet intermediaries trading in jewels, precious metals, and occasionally, the sorcerous assistance of these paramount practitioners of the Warp-tainted arts.

In addition to serving as each Biomancer Lord's seat of power and stronghold, the Citadels are centres of learning and the Biomancer's art, with each lord presiding over a court of lesser practitioners, most being those who have travelled to the Writhing World to learn its secrets. Each Biomancer Lord has his or her own policies in dealing with such supplicants. Some have been known to accept many apprentices after only a cursory vetting process, most likely expecting that the danger of the work itself would weed out those who lacked the ability or discipline to master the art. Others set gruelling trials and gauntlets, forcing any who would learn at their knees nearly impossible tasks and insolvable puzzles, only to often eradicate even those who pass these horrible ordeals, for no other reason than to suit their passing fancy. The only certainty any who seek the assistance of a Biomancer Lord faces is that many more have died following that path than have lived to tell of their success or failure.

The Crawling Citadels are garrisoned with forces of a mixed, chaotic nature. Many of the men and women who stand watch upon the ivory walls are warriors recruited from off world, from among the most puissant and intimidating mercenaries of the Screaming Vortex. Many of the rest represent the strongest and most ferocious tribesmen culled from the local nomadic huskmens.



Huskmen Champion (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
40	28	32	49	37	36	35	32	38	--

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 11

Armour: Chitinous Armour (3 All)

Total TB: 7

Skills: Awareness (Per), Interrogation (WP), Survival (Per) +10.

Talents: Cold Hearted, Frenzy, Jaded, Swift Attack.

Traits: Unnatural Toughness (3).

Weapons: Ancestral chitinous weaponry (Melee; 2d10+3; Pen 2; Crippling (2)).

Gear: Tattered armour of vermin chitin, makeshift tools and weapons, ornate bone fetishes.

Magna-Louse (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
45	01	41	58	38	21	38	20	12	--

Movement: 10/16/22/40

Wounds: 22

Armour: Chitinous Plating (4 All)

Total TB: 8

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag), Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag) +10, Parry (WS), Survival (Per).

Talents: Ambidextrous, Berserk Charge, Blind Fighting, Catfall, Combat Master, Hard Target, Heightened Senses (Smell), Leap Up.

Traits: Bestial, Crawler, Deadly Natural Weapons, Quadruped, Size (5), Sturdy, Unnatural Toughness (3).

Weapons: Scything forelimbs (Melee; 2d10+4; Pen 2).

Gear: None.

Huskmen of the Writhing World (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
38	25	30	41	35	33	31	30	35	--

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 8

Armour: Chitinous Armour (3 All)

Total TB: 6

Skills: Awareness (Per), Survival (Per) +10.

Talents: Cold Hearted, Double Team, Jaded.

Traits: Unnatural Toughness (2).

Weapons: Primitive chitin blades (Melee; 1d10+3 R; Pen 0).

Gear: Tattered clothing crafted from sloughed off planetary skin, makeshift tools and weapons, coveted bone fetishes.

Sorcerer-King's Writhing Swarm (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
34	01	21	25	34	07	34	16	07	--

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 10†

Armour: Chitinous Armour (3 All)

Total TB: 2

Skills: Awareness (Per), Survival (Per)

Talents: Swift Attack.

Traits: Swarm, Toxic (3), Variable Size†.

Weapons: Chitinous Jaws (Melee; 1d10+4; Pen 1d10).

†**Variable Size:** This creature's Wounds value varies for summoned swarms.

Giant Bottle-Fly Swarm (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
35	01	05	22	35	07	45	14	01	--

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 60+

Armour: None

Total TB: 8

Skills: Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag) +20.

Talents: None.

Traits: Bestial, Daemonic (2), Dark-sight, Flyer (4), From Beyond, Unnatural Toughness (6), Size (2), Swarm, Vectors of the Plague God's Mirth†.

†**Vectors of the Plague God's Mirth:** Whenever this creature hits with a melee attack (regardless of whether or not it inflicts Damage), the target must make a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test**. If the target fails, he must roll on **Table 2-1: Boons of the Plague God** (see page 40) and immediately apply the results. Non-living creatures (and creatures immune to disease) are immune to this effect.

Weapons: Infectious Maw (Melee; 1d5-3; Pen 0).

Gear: None.

HINDRANCE

"Travel the Vortex, my pretties! Wander free, wander far! Spread the Rotfather's gifts and blessings! You are his beloved vectors; there shall be no let or hindrance to your passage!"

—Transmission intercept from the junkyard moon of Alactia

The world of Hindrance, an unprepossessing sallow orb of yellow-brown sands, swathed in murky storms and blasted by a constant stream of Warp energies which swirl and skirl around it, squats within a few scant weeks' travel from the Thirteenth Station of Passage. One of the Gloaming Worlds at the outer edge of the Screaming Vortex, Hindrance's growing reputation as a place sacred to the Lord of Decay has led it to become a place of fevered pilgrimage for Nurgle's followers. Myths and legends surrounding the planet abound; the tattered and rusting vessels of the Nurg Culti now regularly lay over for short periods to allow passengers to disembark and seek some sign of their festering Lord's approval or favour.

THE PATH TO HINDRANCE

Hindrance's planetary system lies directly in the path of a notorious Warp-current known as the Black Gyre, which tips craft emerging from the corpse-shrouded maw of the Thirteenth Station of Passage directly into a whirlpool of eldritch energies which gush inward towards the heart of the Vortex. The Gyre skittishly curls around the hateful region of space known as the Anathema and plunges in a vast spiral into the Gloaming Worlds region. For those caught within the Gyre's clutches, the experience is very much like being trapped in a small boat on a fast flowing river being impelled towards a vertiginous waterfall. The Warp current tears at and rattles any ship that traverses it, the sounds of a billion claws raking along the hull's exterior driving those within to distraction, and making a mockery of attempts to escape. Those battered vessels which survive the Gyre's onslaught are deposited on the outskirts of the Hindrance system.

The system consists of a dim brown dwarf star, then Hindrance itself, a sickly desert world, and Hindrance's two moons, Alactia and Megaria. The nameless star emits a bruised, guttering light and enough heat to provide a narrow habitable zone. Hindrance and its moons float within this zone, locked in a tight, almost inconceivably complex orbit. All three intermittently wander through the pale un-light of the Black Gyre's current, which pours slowly around and between them, flowing in an eerie and unpredictable cascade of unfathomable energies. Where these energies touch each world they scour and blast them, taking the form of great storms that crawl slowly across the surface.

Those entering the Hindrance system from space, whether by accident or design, find themselves challenged upon approach by a small but potent fleet of battered system monitors and light raiders operating from the rusted moon of Alactia. This fleet, known as the Septet, is unusual within the Screaming Vortex for its ostensibly casual attitude towards interlopers. Typically, visitors are hailed in a benign, worldly, and friendly fashion in the name of the Lord of Decay and invited to state their business. Anything short of an expression

of devotion to Tzeentch or an outright declaration of an intent to attack the Septet, Hindrance, or its moons is met with a hearty welcome to the system and a cheerful declaration that the travellers are free to partake in all that Hindrance and its environs has to offer. The Septet will escort visitors to any destination within the system, though they themselves will steer clear of entering the orbit of the black moon, Megaria.

HINDRANCE ITSELF

Hindrance is a fundamentally ugly and bleak world. From orbit its sandy surface is the colour of decaying, greasy flesh. Pockmarked with impact craters from some long forgotten prehistoric cataclysm, the planet is blanketed in endless grimy deserts which are interrupted only by occasional small, black, dead, silty, and oily seas, which ceaselessly gnaw at the crumbling coasts, eroding them slowly but inevitably.

As Hindrance and its moons spin ponderously around the system's feeble star, they pass unpredictably through the flow of the Black Gyre itself, a current of pure ætheric energy that could not exist outside the Screaming Vortex. Such Warp currents, where they touch the surface of a world, are immensely dangerous to anything living on its surface.

In Hindrance's case, where the edge of the Black Gyre's energies first touch the atmosphere of the planet they initially interact with its weak magnetic field, forming sinister flickering green and yellow lights known locally as the Aurora Rancidus. The Aurora is regarded by those who travel the surface of Hindrance as a harbinger of a greater peril, like scintillating scotoma before a migraine, a sign that the Warp-stuff that flows at the heart of the Gyre is about to enter the atmosphere.

Where the true Warp-tainted energies of the Black Gyre seep through the atmosphere, they fall towards Hindrance's surface like stagnant water poured into rancid oil. As they fall, these vast forces coalesce into colossal thunderheads, grey and brown storm clouds that interact violently with the thin dusty air of the world. Vortices the size of continents form, with winds gusting at speeds of hundreds of miles an hour, spinning widdershins across the face of the planet, scouring away everything beneath them.

The storms are so frequent, so unpredictable, so deadly and destructive that nothing can be built permanently upon the surface of Hindrance. It is a world that is constantly blasted and eroded, constantly disintegrating, decaying from one state to a more disordered one. Paradoxically, it is this very quality which makes it so attractive to those who revere the dark god, Nurgle.

VISITING HINDRANCE

Given the vast Warp-storms which buffet the atmosphere, reaching the surface of the planet is no simple task. At any one time there are two or three such nightmare storms crawling slowly across it, and a skilled (or insane) shuttle pilot is required to deposit travellers safely. Fortunately, the Masters of the ships of the Septet have a number of such pilots indentured into their service, and they are happy to barter for the price of passage. Payment in the form of interesting new plagues is particularly prized, but they have been known to accept dilapidated ship components or other eccentric symbolic contributions that amuse them.



III: LORDS OF ENTROPY

There are few permanent settlements on Hindrance; the world is inimical to prolonged human habitation, lacking potable water or sufficient sunlight to foster the growth of even the hardiest crops. Although the thin, dusty air technically contains the correct combination of elements in broadly the correct proportions to render it breathable for augmented humans, the atmosphere is filled with microscopic dust particles which clog the lungs, causing visitors to hack and cough miserably within minutes of arrival. Prolonged exposure to the planet's air causes the lungs to fill with bloody froth, which can lead to death if left untreated.

The skies are grey and stormy, and from the surface the sun appears only as a distant brown smudge, its weak light barely penetrating the murky gloom. While there are small mountain ranges of crumbling sandstone, and minuscule polar caps formed of yellowing and poisonous ice, the principle topography is desert.

PUSULA

Despite the harsh nature of the world's climate, it is far from uninhabited. Visitors escorted to the surface of Hindrance within the rattling and decrepit interiors of the Septet's shuttles are deposited outside the bounds of Pusula, a tiny, filthy ramshackle shanty town of around 300 souls.

Pusula is the creation of a burgeoning pilgrim culture emerging among the Nurg Culti of the Screaming Vortex, a movement which, despite only emerging within the last handful of decades, seems to enjoy a vivid canon of wicked myths and fables of apparently ancient provenance. This loose

collective of pilgrims are a varied lot, their only common denominators being a devotion to Nurgle, an obsession with accumulating interesting new diseases, and a love of travel. They wander across the entire Screaming Vortex and beyond, like a swarm of flies, never settling for long, always cheerfully seeking to infect whatever lies beyond the next hill, the next planet, the next Sector.

There are certain sites which act as nexuses for these peripatetic lepers; particular places which speak to something deep within their polluted souls, and which serve to draw them together for a time to exchange illnesses and reconfirm their faith. Pusula has become such a place.

The town is composed of temporary dwellings constructed with whatever material the Nurg Culti had to hand when they arrived. As such it is a patchwork shantytown, a cluttered and messy place thrown together haphazardly. Tents are the most common form of accommodation, though shacks built from crates and improvised caravans made from bones are also often seen. Pusula is built on a single dust track "street" over a pair of ancient rusty shipping containers of Imperial manufacture, which have been buried beneath the gritty desert sands. These containers are used as septic tanks for the town, though they double as shelters when the Warp-tainted storms pass by, obliterating everything on the surface. Most would find the idea of being confined neck deep in ordure for days on end with hundreds of others in a tiny underground space utterly appalling, but to the Nurg Culti of Pusula, this is regarded as an amusing diversion, a potential anecdote to regale fellow travellers with on some future occasion. Indeed,

some speak highly of the experience, referring jocularly to "taking the waters on Hindrance" as if they had visited some famed spa on an exotic Imperial paradise world.

The town is routinely destroyed by the frequent Warp-storms; this will happen two or three times every year. However, its inhabitants are hardy and optimistic. After riding out the storm in their reeking bunker, the resilient group of survivors simply emerges to gather up whatever building materials remain within a five mile radius and begin again. They regard this constant cycle of construction, decay, destruction, and rebuilding as amusingly symbolic of Nurgle himself.

Pusula is, unusually for a town frequented by followers of the Ruinous Powers, a generally peaceful place. There are occasional outbreaks of violence between cultists, but these usually take place during the rush to the storm shelters, and as such are regarded as unfortunate side effects of circumstances beyond the control of all involved. Pusula is very much a stopover town, a place to visit briefly, and there are no permanent residents.

A rich oral tradition is emerging among the cultists of Nurgle who visit Pusula. Whichever is the largest shack, caravan, or tent present within the town at any one time acts as a general meeting place for the assembled cultists. As the weak light of the sun fades over the horizon, they regale each other with stories about the Plaguefather, and in particular his relationship with the world of Hindrance, which is starting to be regarded as a world holy to him.

LEGENDS OF HINDRANCE

It is now traditional for those Plague Cultists who visit Hindrance to take three steps in their pilgrimage to the planet. Firstly, they must arrive and listen to the legends of those who have travelled into the wastes of Hindrance before them. Secondly, they must then themselves take a pilgrimage into the deepest deserts themselves, in order to commune with the desolate, entropic heart of Nurgle himself. Finally, those who survive this journey (and most do not) must return to Pusula and pass on both what they have learned and what they have been infected with.

The tattered pilgrims of the Plague God are drawn to Hindrance by the belief that there is an intensely symbolic and magically significant link between the planet and Nurgle himself. They see his rotting hand everywhere in the world; in the constant scouring and destruction of the Warp-storms, in the crumbling of the mountains to desert. They believe that Hindrance is an entropic paradise, a world that decays endlessly, a place of divine judgement, punishment, and teaching where Grandfather Nurgle tests the faith of his followers. Those who truly wish to commune with their dark god must travel here and journey to the heart of the deepest Warp-scoured

wastes, there to experience dreams and visions that illuminate their master's plans for them. They believe that here Nurgle either sadly chides his errant children for their failings before magnanimously setting them back upon the path to glory, their sins forgiven, their faith having been tested and restored, or if their faith is weak, punishes them, blasting their souls and funnelling them directly into the Warp itself.

Those who venture forth from Pusula into the wastes of Hindrance tend to do so in jovial plague caravans, filled with dozens of pilgrims bickering cheerfully among themselves. Those few surviving cultists who stagger back in ones and twos to Pusula are somehow altered by the experience. No less jocular, they are nevertheless more focused, more devoted to the task of spreading Nurgle's gifts beyond the Screaming Vortex. They are said to have completed the bleak pilgrimage, and their words are hung upon by other Nurg Cult.

Those who survive the bleak pilgrimage speak in reedy, phlegmy voices of journeys lasting weeks through the blasted desert wastes of Hindrance. They describe an experience which tested their endurance to the very limit: of limping, scab-shod through endless fields of flinty blade-edged rock, of running low on supplies and being forced to turn to cannibalism, of consuming the reeking and diseased corpses of their fellow pilgrims.



THE BONE DESERT

The survivors speak of encountering deserts of yellow-brown bone-scattered sand. At first they encounter a few separated femurs, the odd skull—nothing to the jaded cultists of Nurgle, who will have seen far worse on the journey to Hindrance. Surely these are the remnants of some previous failed caravan, one whose members lacked the true faith of those who now pass them.

Soon, however, the travellers speak of encountering more bones. Not in ones and twos, but in sevens and eights, piled up and against each other randomly. Then dozens in one place. Then hundreds stretched out over several miles. And finally the travellers speak of deserts that begin to consist solely of bones, the grains of sand sinking away beneath the endless tide of death. Millions—perhaps billions—of corpses. The rheumy, inflamed eyes of the surviving bleak pilgrims shine with an unhealthy light as they speak of endless piles of yellowing, desiccated bones, slowly disintegrating and collapsing into dust beneath the pitiless grey lowering skies.

Where have these bodies come from, the Culti ask each other. Theories abound. Some say a great war must have taken place on Hindrance in ages past. Others say these are the corpses of useless slaves dumped from orbit by the Dark Magi of Alactia. Still more posit that there must have been some great civilisation here once, overtaken by a great plague, a suggestion which causes much excitement among those assembled.

Those who have walked the bleak pilgrimage shake their misshapen heads, and claim that instead these are the bodies of all those who died in Nurgle's service, transported here mystically by his servants. They raspingly assert that Hindrance is the cankered eye of Nurgle himself, and that to walk across its surface is to draw his attention to oneself; those deserving of his grace are rewarded, those undeserving are shattered, their bodies cast to the dry surface of the world to crumble to dust.

FAITHLESS

They further regale their rapt listeners with tales of Nurgle playfully testing those who wander the Bone Deserts with encounters with the corpses of the faithless, those who died in the service of Nurgle but without the true love of their master rotting their souls from within. They say that after walking for many days through the Bone Deserts, subsisting upon the rare meagre fragments of parched flesh remaining on the bones of the fallen, the dead themselves arise and challenge them. These "Faithless" take the form of the better preserved bodies, still bearing odd scraps of clothing. Ghastly, sand encrusted dried corpses, the Faithless stagger to their disintegrating feet and lurch towards the pilgrims; their mouths open in a wordless scream of jealousy and hatred, bemoaning the favour shown to them by their very continued existence. Such pitiful remnants of the fallen are feeble individually, but soon arise in greater numbers, shambling towards the interlopers in their dozens. They cannot be pleaded or bargained with, and must be smashed aside by the wanderer, cleaved into their base components, a sight which is claimed by the bleak pilgrims to delight Nurgle, symbolic as it is of the process of disintegration, of things falling apart and returning to the dust.

Faithless Mob (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
25	01	25	30	21	16	32	20	11	--

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 45

Armour: None

Total TB: 3

Skills: Awareness (Per), Heightened Sense (Sound).

Talents: None.

Traits: Dark-sight, Fear (2), From Beyond, Natural Weapons, Vectors of the Plague God's Mirth†.

Weapons: Rotted Fangs and Desiccated Talons (Melee; 1d10+2; Pen 0).

Gear: Tattered rags and parched scraps of skin.

†**Vectors of the Plague God's Mirth:** Whenever this creature hits with a melee attack (regardless of whether or not it inflicts Damage), the target must make a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test**. If the target fails, he must roll on **Table 2-1: Boons of the Plague God** (see page 40) and immediately apply the results. Non-living creatures (and creatures immune to disease) are immune to this effect.



THE BROKEN TEMPLE

Those few pilgrims who claim to have survived encounters with the massed Faithless say that they eventually pass through the Bone Deserts, discarded gleaming skulls glaring reproachfully at their backs, and that they wander into a new region, the remnant of what must once have been a great volcanic plain.

Here, the cultists spend days wandering across a silent, utterly desolate landscape, with no geological feature more than a few inches high. The skies are dark, a few weak stars glimmering indistinctly. The twin moons pass overhead in unpredictable patterns, obscuring the stars and occasionally eclipsing the murky sun. The glass-black moon of Megaria causes those who gaze upon it for too long to fall into a deep depression, thoughts of despair and misery overtaking their conscious minds. When the rusting junk-moon of Alactia is overhead, those same individuals become cheerful and energetic, despite being by now clothed only in tattered rags and being delirious from lack of food or water.

The few survivors of this fevered death march describe how after what could have been days or weeks of walking, with black sand crunching underfoot, the sky darkens, the tell-tale signs of one of the great Warp-storms' approach. All surviving Bleak Pilgrims tell their audience that at this point they were expecting to be torn to shreds by the power of the storm, which shrieks and wails, and seems to funnel itself purposefully over the horizon. The bleak pilgrims describe how they followed the storm, drawn by some instinctual feeling that they were being called by the howl of the wind itself.

They tell of how, after journeying for a further age, they came to see in the distance what appeared to be some form of low building. As they approach, they realised that they were at a great distance from it, and that as such it was built on an impossibly titanic scale. Approaching the building over hours that eventually stretch into days, they finally are able to pick out its individual features.

There are many different descriptions of the building, and the precise details vary for each teller, leading some to suppose that every cultist sees a different construction. Some describe fallen pillars hundreds of feet in circumference that would have reached kilometres into the sky, supporting a roof that must have weighed more than most cities before its collapse. Others mention crumbling spires or domes; yet others talk of a single fallen ziggurat slumped under its own weight. However it appears physically to those who stagger back from the wastes, the building is invariably described as a "temple," albeit one constructed on a scale which would dwarf all but the largest cathedrals of the Imperium's Corpse-God. Apparently hewn from some black stone, the temple is always spoken of as broken and shattered, and all who have seen it agree that it continues to crumble and disintegrate before their very eyes, with some architectural feature sliding away to oblivion as they approach, or with a constant rain of slates or bricks falling from some obscure corner. This "Broken Temple," as it is known, sits at the heart of the eye of the vast storm which whirls around it.



THE EMBODIED FURY OF THE GODS

As the black clouds of the storm move towards the centre of the vast whirlpool centred over the Temple, they spasm sickeningly, coalescing and splintering into thousands of bestial, winged figures that flock to the jagged rafters of the Broken Temple. The Bleak Pilgrims claim these Chaos Furies are Daemons formed from the very soul-stuff of those faithless Nurgle worshipers whose corpses line the Bone Deserts. They squabble like animals, raking the basalt walls of the temple with their claws, yet they do not assault the pilgrims who approach the temple.

Chaos Fury (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
37	15	32	35	30	11	38	27	09	05

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Armour: None

Skills: Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag) +20, Psyniscience (Per).

Talents: Heightened Sense (Smell).

Traits: Bestial, Daemonic (1), Dark-sight, Flyer (5), From Beyond, Deadly Natural Weapons.

Weapons: Claws and Fangs (2d10+3 R; Pen 1d5; Tearing).

Daemonic Presence: All enemies within 5 metres of a Chaos Fury suffer a -5 penalty to Willpower Tests.

Inside the temple, stained by accumulated centuries of the stinking daemonic spoor of the Furies, the pilgrims discovered names etched into the walls of the building itself; inscribed in tiny letters, barely legible. There were billions of names, reaching up the towering internal walls of the temple, covering every nook and scone. These are, the Bleak Pilgrims' claim, the names of the followers of Nurgle, chiselled here by some unseen, foetid tallyman seeking fruitlessly to catalogue and define the universe, an insane and impossible effort to trap the universe in unchanging decay forever. Here the few surviving pilgrims find themselves compelled to scour the walls of the temple for their own names, proving their worth as followers of the Rotfather. Given the impossible scale of the Broken Temple, this task can take many weeks; the pilgrims are forced to degrade themselves by consuming the corpses of those who have failed to complete the task; to construct ladders from the bones of these same fallen which enable them to peruse the names marked on the higher walls.

Those who admit defeat in this seemingly impossible task are instantly torn to shreds by the ever-vigilant Furies, their souls ripped from their bodies, there to join the ranks of their killers. However, those who persevere, who remain cheerful despite the seemingly impossible and fruitless nature of their task, are eventually rewarded with sight of their own name, scratched in tiny letters feebly into some obscure cranny of the cyclopean temple. At this moment, their status as a true follower of Nurgle is confirmed. Every survivor of the bleak pilgrimage describes this as a seminal moment, where they feel the eye of Nurgle himself upon them, and hear his distant avuncular chuckle. The Furies shriek impotently, enraged to see another soul escape their clutches, and flee back into the heart of the storm, which retreats and fades away to nothingness, leaving the pilgrims free to continue on their way.



THE BLOATED PILGRIM

Those Bleak Pilgrims who have wandered the Bone Deserts and who have survived the trial of the Broken Temple are now marked as more robust and deadly than those who did not. Their fortitude has been noted by Nurgle, but there is one final test for them.

As they recount their experiences to those who have yet to commence their pilgrimage, their eyes grow bright with awe, and their voices tremble, their throats filling with sickly phlegm. They speak of how, as they staggered in tattered rags, dehydrated, hallucinating, starving, and falling prey at last to the many diseases which have beset them for years, they encountered a single bloated pilgrim in a caravan apparently constructed from bones, pulled by a staggering pony whose tattered and rotting hide hung loosely from its skeletal frame. They explain how the fat, distended pilgrim invited them to rest awhile within his caravan, giving them stinking food and brackish water to drink, nursing them through the worst of their fevers and into yet higher and more disturbed ones.

The Bleak Pilgrims dreamily speak of days in the company of this obese traveller, whose basso profundo laugh and easy, cheerful manner they eagerly attempt to imitate, to the delight of all listeners. They talk of how they would engage in games of riddles, though none of the Bleak Pilgrims can be drawn on the questions that were posed.

Finally, they gleefully divulge that their portly saviour ultimately revealed himself to be no less a figure than Nurgle himself, testing the Bleak Pilgrims' faith and finding them equal to the task of travelling onwards to infect the world. This is invariably too much for the listeners, who angrily denounce the storytellers for exceeding the bounds of reason, and straying perhaps even into blasphemy. Such charges are met equally angrily by the Bleak Pilgrims, and at this stage lesioned hands invariably stray to rusted daggers. Typically, some croaky voice of reason will pipe up at this point, suggesting conciliatory that perhaps the bloated pilgrim is some aspect of Nurgle, or a Greater Daemon in his service. Tempers calm, and a civil debate then proceeds upon the nature of Nurgle's Daemons and how the distinction between the god and the Greater Daemon is a fine one, and perhaps academic. All agree that the bloated pilgrim is truly blessed to have survived his pilgrimage, and voices are raised in praise to the Lord of Decay.

Those who complete this final trial are surely the favoured of Nurgle, and rank among the most devout of his servants. No one knows what happens to those who fail his tests, though it is likely that their bodies rest on Hindrance forever as piles of dust-coated bones within the deep desert, their souls screaming eternally in the insane eddies of the Black Gyre.

MEGARIA

"Slog for two-hundred paces across the surface of the curse-moon. There your ultimate truth awaits you, with bated breath."

—The Many-Eyed Oracle of Chaos

Hanging silently in the grey skies of Hindrance, the moon of Megaria is a baleful and sombre presence. It appears as a black orb, utterly dark. Light seems to fall into the moon itself, and it radiates a dour and palpable sense of menace.

Travelling to the moon is an almost suicidal endeavour; any ship that does so discovers that Megaria possesses a gravity well that is completely out of proportion to its size. While the moon's radius itself is less than a thousand kilometres, it registers to the systems of any approaching vessel as possessing a gravitational field equivalent to dozens of solar masses, triggering klaxons and alarms throughout the ship, as the hull flexes and shudders under the pressure. No ship that has travelled to Megaria has ever returned: instead they have plummeted to the surface, crushed under their own immense weight, which is magnified many thousand fold by the moon's bizarre gravitational field.

The moon thus possesses many of the properties of a neutron star, though its size and stable (if eccentric) orbit around Hindrance, a medium-sized terrestrial planet, suggests that it is in fact something else. For most visitors to the Hindrance system it remains a disquieting enigma.

However, for those who worship Nurgle, it is yet another holy place, symbolic of that aspect of his character which represents the eternal battle against despair and death. Megaria represents death, the end of all, utter desolation and ruin. It is the reaction of living things to the fear of such concepts that empowers Nurgle. As a result, those powerful sorcerers who worship Nurgle undertake great vision-quests to the surface of Megaria in order to steep themselves in its baleful energies.

ALACTIA

"They say that the Magi Morbos have a peculiar inclination toward scrap-code subterfuge; if the rumours are true and I can claim their secrets, no machine-spirit will be safe from my viro-indoctrination!"

—Rhodan Polikharp,
Viral Virtuoso of Addolorata

The third major body of the Hindrance system, Alactia, is famed across the Screaming Vortex as "the junkyard moon." From space, its pitted and rusting iron surface resembles an overripe, rotting, orange-coloured fruit, surrounded by buzzing insects. These "insects" are in fact the mercantile fleets of the Dark Tech-Priests of Alactia, the Magi Morbos, who, from small beginnings, have built their world into a minor regional power.

Alactia is the most habitable of the three realms of the Hindrance system, though this is hardly a proud boast given the generally inhospitable nature of its terrestrial bodies. It bears a thin, acrid atmosphere that can sustain human life of a kind, and it lacks the vicious Warp-driven storms of Hindrance or the crushing gravitational field of Megaria. The surface of Alactia is, save for a few denuded landing fields serving as rough and ready starports, entirely covered in a

blanket of rusting mechanical devices, stacked into towers hundreds of feet high. The moon brims with decrepit mechanical equipment scavenged by the Magi Morbos from sources across the Screaming Vortex and the Koronus Expanse. There are small, hopelessly polluted seas, tainted with runoff chemicals leaking from the vast graveyard of broken vehicles and machines piled along their shores. These seas now only serve to create a sickly precipitation which coats the entire surface of the moon in a veneer of grimy rust.

The Hindrance system occupies a strategic location close to the Thirteenth Station of Passage. It has since time immemorial attracted interest from those enemies of the Imperium who sought to travel between the nightmare realm of the Screaming Vortex and the Koronus Expanse beyond. Some three centuries ago, a small Nurgle-worshipping cult of heretekks affiliated with a larger group of pirates operating within the Koronus Expanse crossed into the Screaming Vortex, and found the Hindrance system much to their liking. These pioneers were much impressed by the clear symbolic links between the system and The Lord of Decay, and thus they opted to stay and transform the world into a place pleasing to them.

Known since that time as the Magi Morbos, these Nurglesque heretekks lack the profound depth of spiritual corruption found in the Biomancers of the Writhing World or the unholy technological prowess of the Warpsmiths of Guelph. Theirs is rougher, readier, and more practical form of expertise, still empowered by the twisted energies of the Screaming Vortex, but focussed upon achieving more modest aims than the creation of new life or the binding of Daemons into mechanical devices. The Magi Morbos instead see themselves as tradesmen, there to fulfil a pressing need among the spacefaring communities of the Screaming Vortex for the maintenance of their vessels, which are invariably much battered by the prevailing conditions. The Magi Morbos spend their days in worn and patched vacuum suits, merrily toiling on the hulls of orbiting ancient starships, like tics crawling across the corpses of beached whales.

The Magi Morbos are happy to accept payment for this work in the form of slaves or plunder, but show a particular interest in consideration that takes the form of malfunctioning mechanical devices, the older, more decrepit and complex the better. Alternatively, customers are free to infect one of the Magi with some new and interesting disease, or to consent to have their entire crew receive any of the various technomaladies and viral wrack-codes carried by the Magi themselves in payment for work carried out.



MIRE

"You worship flesh, cultist; savour feeling, pretty flesh. Battle is done. You lay dying, now learning the truth of flesh—from flesh that all comes and all goes, and as the Lord of All demands."

—Garlea, Priornite of Mire

Observing Mire from afar, there is little more to perceive than a mass of white and grey clouds that swirl above a barren brown landscape stretched across the whole of the planet. There are no mountains, seas, or fields of growth; only the occasional plain of flat stone or dismal bog dots the land. The texture of the visible terrain is unnaturally smooth and uniform, perpetually racked by rainfall that is as persistent as it is common, no matter where on the planet you might be. Despite the atmosphere's consistent weather patterns, the entire world is almost devoid of life.

The few sorcerers and hereteks unfortunate enough to find themselves on Mire have developed numerous theories as to why and how the planet came to be so barren; postulations of a travelling Warp vortex, races of elemental xenos, and the machinations of renegade Magos Biologis are among the most popular. The truth of the entire matter of Mire has been shrouded by the passage of time, but artefacts of its history can be found by the ambitious and foolhardy.

The near-constant rainfall here does more than fester rot and infection in the living; the entire world is in a constant cycle of decay. The few sheets of slate rock that dot the planet shift slightly in the least viscous seas of mud, opening air pockets re-sealed millennia ago after the world's tumultuous journey through the Warp and into the Screaming Vortex. The most devoted savants of the damnable Imperium of Man and the greatest heretic scholars know only inklings of Mire's true history, and those that perform their own archaeological expeditions rarely escape the ever-churning subterranean caverns.

Once a lush world filled with super-flora, the jungles of Mire developed pestilence of a potency and infectious nature equalled by no other planet in the galaxy. The venomous swamps and forests bred equally toxic fauna, leaving the smartest (and most dominant) life forms, Mirens, to develop cannibalistic diets, consuming their own dead to survive. With this practice and the natural hazards of the planet, its denizens naturally fell into worship of the Plague Lord to survive the myriad diseases spawned on Mire.

No diplomatic visit was required before Inquisitor Vardask deemed it unworthy of re-integration and called down the order for Exterminatus Extremis. Miren fortune-tellers foresaw the death of their world in the entrails of their victims, brought about by the False Emperor from afar and carried out with the most violent pathogen known to sentient beings; a grand ritual was prepared and all the most devout members of their race gathered in the capital of Virulous to beseech the Plague Father for his protection from their impending doom.

Nurgle saw fit to protect these supplicants. The Ruinous Power briefly manifested near Mire, playfully swatting the *Nihilo Ordere* from orbit, causing the space flotilla to pull back and withhold most of their firebomb payload, and trusting that the Life-Eater virus would do its job. The Great Corruptor then wrapped his pestilential arms around the devoted in Virulous,

absorbing the Life-Eater virus that the Imperium of Man dropped onto Mire. Countless acolytes fell to the diseases that emanated from the Father of Pestilence, their immune systems as incapable of coping with the potency of his decaying form as the few plants that survived salvation at the hands of Nurgle.

As the Ruinous Power's attentions left Mire, the vessel's reactor finally exploded; the proximity to the Plague Father's presence caused the huge energy signature to jump the entire world into the Warp, careening through the Empyrean to eventually land in the Screaming Vortex. Travel through the Immaterium shook the planet's fragile core and released massive pockets of air (many displacing the countless Daemons that now inhabit the planet). These previously trapped gasses mixed with the atmosphere and created a torrential downpour that lasted for decades. The Long Rain cleaned away large slabs of slate dislodged by the quakes, but all of the remaining landmasses were washed away into seas and oceans of mud. Those that survived the cataclysm spread word of the inevitable death to any that brave the below.

Of the original worshipers saved by Nurgle, only one or two million survived the Long Rain, and half as many perished from the final death throes of the *Nihilo Ordere*. Those that remained have been bred by the Lord of Decay over centuries, the diseases endured by their ancestors hand-selected by the Plague Lord far in advance to ensure that the perfect carrier hosts eventually sire the bloodline. The warlords that take exceptional Mirens, from sage Priornites to savage Death Priests, to serve in their Black Crusades unknowingly carry with them the truest missionaries of the Master of Pestilence, spreading his infectious gospel to the far corners of the galaxy.

The Mirens spread out from Virulous to the isolated slate rocks that provide the planet's only secure ground, carrying samples from the ultra-polluted swamps that survived a brush against their lord's presence in the vain hopes of cultivating an edible resource. Strained to the limits of fatigue and starvation, they settled apart from one another, creating dynasties determined by plagues passed on through generations of cerebral consumption. The strongest Mirens and those naturally gifted by Chaos are privy to this revered bounty of the recent dead, creating a potent new ruling class often steeped in the powers of the Warp: Priornites.

These brain-gorged scions of disease embody the most potent psychic abilities granted by Nurgle and provide the means through which the Great Corruptor brings his agents onto Mire. This intense breeding program and despicable diet has left a genetic flaw designed for the children of the Plague Father aeons ago; every thousandth Miren born to the tribes possesses a superior immune system extremely resistant to disease. These hapless creatures (named "Pyrions" by their progenitors) are ritually sacrificed by Mire's Death Priests, their insides torn asunder and exposed to sacred samples of Nurgle's Rot before they are devoured.

The Daemons of the Master of Pestilence arise from these ritual piles of discarded humanity, fully materialised in all their putrid glory. This blasphemous practice has gone on for centuries and now the Plague Lord's Warp-children wander the endless mud flats of Mire, spreading the few diseases not already shared by the tribes of Mirens that fiercely protect their tumultuous territories.

VIRULOUS

If it could be said that Mire had a capital, Virulous would be it. Situated in the shelter granted by a massive piece of deck plating that ripped off the *Nihilo Ordere* as it entered into the atmosphere, the entire settlement lives and dies upon the capricious whim of the Keisari, who is blessed by the Plague God.

The Keisari of Virulous grew fat on the brains of every corpse that fell near his tribe, gorging himself for decades on the neural delights of thousands of Mirens. As the population of his city grew, so did the presence of Daemons on Mire. Now dozens of Plaguebearers, Nurglings, Beasts of Nurgle, and Rot Flies roam outside of the haphazard settlement, ensuring that the collected dead are brought to the Keisari for consumption. The ultra-potent Priornite has come to resemble the Plague Father; a rotting collection of fatty tissue ripe with disease and infections, his incredible psychic powers amplified by the disgusting nutrient paste developed only for his consumption. The valuable brains of any corpses that fall in Virulous are gathered together in a massive vat of peculiar liquids, providing the Keisari with mental nourishment.

Virulous is an especially dangerous place, a world where dog literally eats dog, or where they would if they hadn't long ago been eaten by the mutated string of humanity that calls Mire home. The rare establishment of civilised intent can be found, but most Mirens believe them to be haunted. Ultimately, few ever intend to find themselves on Mire, and fewer still stay any longer than absolutely necessary.

The Keisari knows of nearly all that happens on Mire (which is fairly little), absorbing all the knowledge within the minds of those he consumes. There are scores of rumours that travel to and fro in Virulous (most of them about potential sources of food) but few hold any truth. One that has interested the Keisari for some time is the local legend of a death vault in the collapsing mud caverns a few days travel from the settlement. If there is any veracity to the tale, a Warp-sustained strain of the Life-Eater Virus, suspended in a bubble of time that has extended its lifespan a billion-fold.

A more troubling rumour has reached the Keisari and he has begun to mobilize and gather the unholy forces at his beck and call to address it. Somewhere far removed from Virulous, a Pyrion survived a regimen of harrowing Nurgle's Rot infections and has become an extremely powerful psyker. While the population shuns and fears this unnaturally clean outcast, the breadth and potency of his psychic powers are the stuff of legend, and it is said that he roams the mud flats of Mire. The Keisari rejoices that one day he will be joined with the Great Corruptor, but is in no hurry to do so, and repulses at the thought of a Pyrion being the means of his end.

Whether or not that bears any truth, there is a great danger that lurks in the endless mud flats which the Keisari is always prepared for. The scores of countless bodies of those who died in the Exterminatus Extremis of Mire suffuse the very soil with bio-matter, and some of their souls linger as well. A Lutomorbus the size of a starship wanders the wastes, crushing Mirens and Daemons alike with its ponderous strides.



MYSTERIES OF MIRE

Several aspiring Priornites and hundreds of Mirens have died attempting to find the rumoured haven of the Life-Eater virus in a desperate attempt to earn the Keisari's favour and a week's worth of all the food they can eat—their bloated emperor desperately wishes to taste the natural growth of Mire, and will reward anyone that can provide it with these boons and gifts more wicked still.

Recently, the word that travels through Virulous claims that the Pyrion psyker has begun to collect others like himself, and that he plans to sacrifice them all to the Plague Father in a grand ritual that will change the world of Mire forever. The ley lines of the Warp carry portent of this impending rite, and some of the psychic energies from this motley warband are visible from across the expanse of the galaxy to those with a means to perceive them. The end result of the mass sacrifice could be enough to bring this Pyrion, or anyone that manages to take this boon for themselves, to Daemonhood.

Sightings of the titanic Lutomorbus are as infrequent as an eclipse but, should it ever threaten Virulous, the Keisari has a dedicated (and moderately well-fed) selection of Mirens prepared to carry him within the gutted remains of the *Nihilo Ordere* and down the mile-long caverns he has had excavated within the slate rock beneath it. Should there be any chance that it appears near his settlement, the Keisari will reward any warband capable of subduing or otherwise diverting the monstrosity, perhaps even sharing some of the many heretical (and assuredly inedible) treasures he keeps in this hideaway deep within the slate. Miren hunters, Death Priests, Priornites, and even off-worlders have all been slain seeking this devastating creature.

WRETCHES OF MIRE

These gaunt alabaster humanoids have soft skin covered in diseased flesh and infectious growth, their eyes devoid of pupils and consumed by darkness. Sharpened, yellow teeth spit out their mumbling feral language, degrading in quality as the esteem of its speaker increases. Hunched over and little other than bones, their afflicted skin is chitinous and rough, making their taloned hands into effective weapons.

Their tribal societies worship plagues and sickness, honouring those with the most aggressive or violent afflictions. Cannibalism is as fundamental to their culture as disease. When the rare Pyrion or “clean one” is found, if it is identified by a Death Priest, it is immediately slaughtered and consumed (just like all of the other dead on their home planet of Mire). The only part of the bodies of the dead that these voracious warriors do not consume is the brain, a sacred organ reserved only for their elite.



Miren Wretch (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
33	22	32	33	29	21	32	17	15	--

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 9

Armour: Dead Tissue (1 All)

Total TB: 4

Skills: Athletics (Strength) +0, Dodge (Ag) +0, Stealth (Ag) +0, Survival (Per) +0.

Talents: Lightning Reflexes, Resistance (Poisons).

Traits: Natural Weapons, Toxic (1), Unnatural Toughness (1).

Weapons: Claws and Teeth (1d10+3 R; Pen 0; Primitive [7], Toxic [1]).

PRIORNITE

Some Mirens are naturally gifted by the Plague Father, developing into psykers. These children are the scions of esteemed bloodlines and gain their abilities from generations of cerebral cannibalism that result in a wide range of encephalitic afflictions. Were it not for this sustained diet of brain matter (especially from their kin) these gifts would come to an end, but there never seems to be a time where a clan of these fearfully respected (and dubiously insane) Mirens is lacking a powerful Priornite.

Every Priornite champions a disease; all have access to Nurgle's Rot, but each carries their particular affliction as a badge of pride and supplication to the Plague Lord. While they might suffer from their sickness while in repose, in battle they are emboldened and empowered by the Great Corruptor, their bodies regenerating as soon as wounds are inflicted upon them.

Priornite (Elite)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
37	29	31	41	22	29	22	47	45	16

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 14

Armour: Rotting Skin Robes (2 All)

Total TB: 6

Skills: Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag) +10, Forbidden Lore (Nurgle) (Int) +10, Psyniscience (Per) +10.

Talents: Psy Rating (3), Resistance (Poisons).

Traits: Psyker, Regeneration (1), Toxic (1), Unnatural Toughness (2).

Weapons: Rotmind Rod (1d10+5 I; Pen 3; Force, Toxic (7)).

Psychic Powers: Field of Pestilence, Inviolable Flesh, Nurgle's Rot (see pages 215–216 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook).

LUTOMORBUS

The very soil of Mire is infused with the blood, bones, and brain matter of its populace, congealed instantly into organic slop by the Life-Eater Virus. While travelling through the Immaterium, something congealed the consciousness of the dead Mirens into walking monstrosities that have come to be known as Lutomorbis. These gargantuan creatures rise from the mud flats, their huge bodies formed from countless corpses that form into crude limbs. They walk the surface of the planet from time to time and no scholar yet has been brave or foolish enough to attempt to discover why (and live to tell of it, at least).

Legends tell of Priornites and Death Priests riding on the backs of these massive creatures as they wade into the few battles that mark the history of the dead world, though none are sure how they came to tame or negotiate with such mysterious, morbid beings. These Massive amalgamations of the dead are ponderous but truly dangerous, slamming their enormous fists (jutting with multitudes of jagged and broken bones) into the ground with unnatural force. When a target flees or proves too nimble to slam with its limbs, the Lutomorbis flings pieces of its form at them instead; the corpses explode into bone shrapnel upon impact, killing most near wherever it lands. All the while, it wails a baleful moan as it fights or searches for ever more opponents to add to its body.

Lutomorbis (Master)										
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf	
35	29	81	70	28	15	19	35	11	--	

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Armour: None

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Intimidate (Fel) +30, Logic (Int) +10, Psyniscience (Per).

Talents: Baleful Dirge, Combat Sense, Whirlwind of Death.

Traits: Dark-Sight, Deadly Natural Weapons, Fear 4, From Beyond, Multiple Arms (4), Natural Weapons, Size (7), Regeneration (7), Sonar Sense, Sturdy, The Stuff of Nightmares, Undying, Unnatural Strength (6), Unnatural Toughness (8).

Weapons: Massive fists (Melee; 2d10+14 I; Pen 7; Concussive [2], Felling [7]), corpse projectiles (Heavy; 30m; 1d10+14 I; Pen 3; Concussive [2], Blast [5], Felling [4]).

Wounds: 120

Total TB: 15

BEAST OF NURGLE

These bulks of festering Daemon-flesh are barely more intelligent than Chaos Spawn, but equally as playful as their diminutive cousins. They ooze across the battlefield, gleefully wrestling the nearest opponent; once they have succumbed to affliction or been crushed to death, the Beast of Nurgle moves to the nearest target to resume its ghastly sport.



Beast of Nurgle (Elite)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
43	34	52	43	25	16	34	34	16	07

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Armour: None

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per).

Talents: None.

Traits: Crawler, Daemonic (3), Dark Sight, Deadly Natural Weapons, Fear (3), From Beyond, Natural Weapons, Regeneration, Size (6), Spewing Tentacles†, Sturdy, Toxic (2), Trail of Slime††, Unnatural Toughness (5), Warp Instability.

Weapons: Tentacles (Melee; 1d10+5 R; Pen 0; Toxic [2]).

Daemonic Presence: All enemies within 20 metres of a Beast of Nurgle suffer a -10 penalty to Willpower Tests.

†**Spewing Tentacles:** Beasts of Nurgle bear a mass of tentacles on their backs. As a Full Action, a Beast of Nurgle can make a Ballistic Skill Test to unleash one of the following effects:

- **Clouds of Flies:** The Beast of Nurgle unleashes a cloud of biting flies. This has the Smoke (7) Quality (see page 151 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook), centred on the Beast.
- **Foul Gases:** Incredibly noxious fumes spew forth from the Beast of Nurgle. Each living creature within 10 metres of a Beast of Nurgle must make a **Difficult (-10) Toughness Test** or be Stunned for 1d5 Rounds.
- **Noxious Fluids:** The Beast of Nurgle sprays a jet of fluid that eats through anything it strikes. One target within 10 metres must make a **Difficult (-10) Toughness Test** or suffer a single hit that inflicts 1d10 Impact Damage (ignoring armour).
- ††**Trail of Slime:** Beasts of Nurgle leave a wake of disgusting slime wherever they walk. Any character who walks through an area so defiled must make a **Difficult (-10) Toughness Test** or suffer 1d10 Impact Damage (ignoring armour and Toughness Bonus) from the carcinogens in the rotting path.





NURLING

These pernicious and capricious Daemons erupt from the boils and pustules that pock the fleshy hide of Great Unclean Ones. They caper and dance about the greater Daemons, causing mischief whenever possible, constantly giggling as they play. Their enemies are another matter entirely, and would do well to avoid their sharp claws; those that survive the rake of a Nurpling's talons often find their wounds festering and incurable.

Nurpling (Troop)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
25	07	16	25	25	16	16	43	25	01

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Armour: None

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20.

Talents: Swift Attack, Takedown.

Traits: Daemonic (2), Deadly Natural Weapons, Fear (1), From Beyond, Natural Weapons, Swarm, Toxic (3), Warp Instability.

Weapons: Teeth and Claws (1d10+1 R; Pen 4; Toxic [3]).

Infected Wounds: Whenever a target fails the Toughness Test from the Toxic Quality of a Nurpling's attack, the target also suffers 1d5 Toughness Damage.

PLAGUE DRONE

The cavalry of Nurgle are one of the fleetest and most dangerous assets of the Great Corruptor's forces. When the call to battle is given, high ranking Plaguebearers and affliction-indulgent Rot Flies undergo a mutual infection that binds their bodies together. They undergo this transformation simultaneously, sharing an intuitive rider-mount persona while gaining additional abilities and protections. They zip through armed conflicts, slashing down foes with Plague Swords while showering the battlefield in disease and pestilence with vile fluids ejected from putrid proboscises.

Plague Drone (Elite)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
43	43	43	52	61	34	43	43	25	07

Movement: 6/12/18/36

Wounds: 40

Armour: None

Total TB: 12

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Dodge +20, Psyniscience (Per) +10, Scholastic Lore (Numerology) (Int), Speak Language (Any One, Miren) (Int).

Talents: Crippling Strike.

Traits: Daemonic (5), Dark Sight, Fear (4), Flyer (6), From Beyond, Natural Weapons, Toxic (4), Unnatural Strength (3), Unnatural Toughness (2), Warp Instability.

Weapons: Plague Sword (1d10+11 R; Pen 4; Balanced, Toxic [4]), Pestilent Proboscis (Ranged; 30m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 I; Pen 2; Pestilent Slime†, Toxic [4]).

Infected Wounds: Whenever a target fails the Toughness Test from the Toxic Quality of a Plague Drone's attack, the target also suffers 1d5 Toughness Damage.

†**Pestilent Slime:** When the Plague Drone inflicts Damage (after reductions for armour and Toughness Bonus) with this weapon, the target also suffers 1d10 Toughness Damage.

Daemonic Presence: All enemies within 30 metres of a Plague Drone suffer a -20 penalty to Willpower Tests.



ABCELLYOTH, HERALD OF NURGLE

The Daemons of Mire do not entirely disperse when they are destroyed and fragments of their being suffuse the planet's soil. Shortly after the dead world's emergence from the Warp, thousands of Daemons that materialised within the many caverns beneath the surface were crushed to death as the mud-caves resealed themselves in torrential washes of dirt during the Long Rain. These disparate expressions of Nurgle's power congealed, coalescing into Abcellyoth, a true Herald of Nurgle. This collection of Warp-spawned entities has been said to turn into a tempest of vermin that descends onto settlements of Mirens bereft of their Priornite, consuming everything but the slate rock upon which their primitive mud-houses and tents once stood.

A scion of disease, this monstrous mass of vermin floats across the battlefield, sewing infection on the forces of enemies and allies alike. They wander the mud flats of Mire, doggedly pursuing anyone unlucky enough to cross their paths without a Priornite to assuage the eldritch consciousness. Even the ravenous Mirens choose not to eat a corpse left by Abcellyoth, leaving what little flesh remains to rot away, or else burning it upon a great pyre, before the ash carries more contagion onto the wind.

Abcellyoth, Herald of Nurgle (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
62	34	54	61	52	34	43	52	34	52

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 30

Armour: None

Total TB: 12

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Psyniscience (Per) +10, Scholastic Lore (Numerology) (Int), Speak Language (Miren) (Int).

Talents: Crippling Strike, Swift Attack.

Traits: Daemonic (6), Dark-sight, Fear 4, From Beyond, Natural Weapons, Sickly Influence†, Toxic (4), Unnatural Toughness (2), Unnatural Strength (2), Warp Instability.

Weapons: Claws and Teeth (1d10+7 R; Pen 5; Tearing, Toxic [4]), Daemonic Vomit (Pistol; 77m; 2d10+5 I; Pen 4; Toxic [5]).

Daemonic Presence: All enemies within 20 metres of Abcellyoth suffer a –20 penalty to Willpower Tests.

Cloud of Flies: Abcellyoth is composed, of and constantly surrounded by, thick clouds of insects. These noxious vermin provide the Daemon with 7 Armour Points of Cover (which fully regenerate at the beginning of each of its Turns). Abcellyoth can see clearly through this barrier and suffers no penalties from the Cloud of Flies.

Nurgle's Rot: A Herald of Nurgle may call upon the Great Corruptor as a Half Action, manifesting this power as though he was a psyker. As a Daemon, a Herald of Nurgle never rolls on the Perils of the Warp but lacking mortal psyker abilities, it always manifests this ability as a Psy Rating 3 effect that requires a roll on the **Table 6–2: Psychic Phenomena** (see page 210 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). The

Herald of Nurgle itself, however, is never subject to any negative effects from such rolls. When activated, this power nullifies the Cloud of Flies ability for one Turn as the vermin all swarm Abcellyoth's target to dispense the Plague Lord's horrid "blessings."

†**Sickly Influence:** Any creature that is struck by Abcellyoth's Vomit, Nurgle's Rot, or melee attacks must make a **Difficult (–10) Toughness Test** or suffer a –20 penalty to all Tests to attack Abcellyoth until the end of its next Turn.

THE THANATOR

The Thanator, an ancient overlord of Mire, is a Priornite of the most advanced age and festering power. His sorcerous abilities are terrifying in combat, and his maggot-worm mind is cunning still, despite the long ages he has ruled.

The Plague God has granted this loyal servant of his with not only eldritch gifts, but also with visions. The Thanator awaits the arrival of several powerful Heretics, on whose quest the Lord of Flies has buzzing, gurgling whispers say he must assist. While the Thanator would never defy his dark god, he demands the respect due him as an ancient and powerful patron of rot on the wretched world of Mire from all who pass through his domain. The Priornite Thanator plays an important role in the adventure contained in this volume, **The Heart of the Vortex**, guiding the Heretics to new heights of power and new depths of despair...

Priornite Thanator (Master)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
32	19	23	43	16	55	22	77	65	34

Movement: 1/2/3/6

Wounds: 21

Armour: Putrid Flesh (1 All)

Total TB: 6

Skills: Awareness (Per) +0, Forbidden Lore (Nurgle) (Int) +20, Psyniscience (Per) +20.

Talents: Psy Rating (5), Resistance (Poisons).

Traits: Psyker, Regeneration (7), Toxic (7), Unnatural Toughness (3).

Weapons: Plague-Cauldron Staff (2d10+5; Pen 5; Decay [1] [see page 42], Force).

Psychic Powers: All of the Nurgle Psychic Powers (see pages 215–216 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook).



THE FROZEN HEART

"It's here! It's right before us! All we have fought for. All we have strived for. The beauty. The terror. The very essence of Chaos within our grasp. Brothers, to arms!"

—Last received transmission of Mithros, Bloodslayer Lord

The Lower Vortex defies logical explanation. The power of Chaos engulfs the entire region, leaving it adrift from such mortal concepts as time and space. Within this realm everything is possible and the power of the Chaos Gods is at its absolute zenith. The worlds trapped within the Lower Vortex are raw and seething, utterly untamed and impossible to inhabit by anything more than the most wretched of the lost and the damned. In this realm, Daemons rule and the screams of the pitiful invade the minds of anyone still sane enough to hear them. At the centre of this swirling nightmare lies the Frozen Heart, a world that exists as the literal eye of the storm. Legends surrounding the Daemon World vary more than any within the Vortex, and while records exist of various attempts to claim whatever prize may lie on its blasted surface, little proof exists that any returned.

EYE OF THE STORM

To the cursed few that have stepped upon a Daemon World and lived to tell the tale, the worlds of the Lower Vortex are pure hell. An anathema to traditional life, these worlds boil with the unbridled energies of the Warp and exist as playthings of the Chaos Gods. Spoken of as a world of balance, however, the Frozen Heart appears to differ from these hellscape. Like the eye of a raging storm, the Frozen Heart sits apart from other Daemon Worlds as the Chaos Gods hold equal sway upon its surface. The planet exists as a microcosm of the entire Vortex, with vast regions that exist in an unending conflict for total domination and complete damnation.

Lunatics that claim to have glimpsed the Frozen Heart in dreams or prophecy say it exists as four distinct domains, each one in perfect balance yet endless battle with those to either side. Some liken it to the four seasons of a year, for as the planet spins on an erratic and ever-changing axis, so do the four regions shift and swell. Few believe those that speak of their time on the surface, but nevertheless even the wisest of the Vortex cannot ignore the similarities in the stories these madmen tell.

Stranger still, the Frozen Heart's poles exist as perilous sanctuaries from the rest of the world. Infused by the raw power of the Vortex, these lands exist apart from the specific machinations of any one Chaos God. Men and mutants, gripped by their last vestiges of hope or sanity, drag themselves to these areas in a desperate final attempt to escape the Daemon World's endless cycle. However, the torments they leave behind seem as luxuries compared to what they find in this terrible destination.

THE DOOM OF WARLORDS

An enduring tale within the Vortex tells of a great champion known as Khander Mithros. A tyrant of extreme cruelty, Mithros focused his attention not outwards towards the greater Imperium, but looked to the centre of the Vortex. Convinced he could claim the Vortex, Mithros launched a campaign of conquest that earned him many titles and a massive army of loyal troops. Finally, convinced of his own supremacy, he headed directly for the Frozen Heart. Records of his conquest stop here, and while some claim to have fled the ruins of Mithros' army through the Ascendant Spiral, almost nothing of Mithros is said to have survived. Many hold Mithros as a warning to those that might steal power from the Chaos Gods, and an inspiration to those mad enough to seek control of the Vortex.

To most within the Vortex, the Frozen Heart is a lurking terror, an undiscovered jewel, and the true axis of the Warp's power. Most know that reaching it alive is all but unachievable, and that reaching it with any shred of sanity is impossible. Yet many have tried, each would-be champion fuelled by the tales of endless riches, unlimited power, and the promise of the great unknowable dynamo—a mythical relic of such unfathomable potency it could decide the fate of a billion billion souls.





UNCONTROLLABLE CALM

Rumours persist that the deeper one delves into the Vortex, the more stable the Warp becomes. True or not, the battle for domination fought amongst the Chaos Gods is endless, and the Frozen Heart plays host to one of the galaxy's most enduring conflicts as each region of the damned world fights daily for a dominance no single Ruinous Power can ever hope to achieve.

THE REALM OF CREATION

As the Frozen Heart turns, so too does the power of Tzeentch reach out to shape and cleanse the previous day's destruction, debauchery, and decay. Within this glittering realm of endless possibilities and shifting architecture, the Changer of Ways weaves new life into the world. Horrors cavort as the ground at their feet heaves and splits with Tzeentch's fleeting desires, and great crystal palaces rise up from the sludge left in Nurgle's wake. Impossible Daemon-plants sprout beside flowing lakes of multicoloured water as Screemers glide among the grasping branches. Mutants of all descriptions parade across the Architect of Fate's domain, their God's insatiable need for change wracking their bodies with boundless transformations. Daemonic sorcerers and colossal Flamers launch streams of ever-shifting energy across the kaleidoscopic skies.

Despite the celebration of Tzeentch's power, the Realm of Creation remains lethal to those opposed to the Great Conspirator, and his multi-hued armies rush to cast aside the forces of Nurgle and claim new territory to renew and evolve. The denizens of Tzeentch's domain also fight a constant battle

THE SHACKLED PRINCE

Deep beneath the Frozen Heart's surface within a massive chamber stands a Daemon Prince so powerful that even his breathing shapes the walls around him. At his feet clusters of insane mutants toil to bring the Prince all he desires, piling objects around him and his throne. The Prince, however, remains unable to indulge in anything, his movement inhibited by four restraints. One is made of gleaming crystal, another of polished brass. Another of studded leather and the final one a decaying rope that the Prince cannot break. Held in place, the Prince endures an eternity of torment, unable to move, unable to leave, and unable to even sit upon the glorious throne behind him. His bellowing screams echo out to no one, not even the uncaring Dark Gods that once gave him everything.

against the approaching forces of Khorne. As the Master of Fortune powers forward, the lands to the rear of his influence twist into a deceptive nightmare of traps and false safe-havens. Here the forces of Khorne struggle against the web of lies before them and the tactics of Tzeentch's mutated rearguard. The fury of Khorne's minions grows until they lash out, madly destroying everything around them, even their allies. This gambit serves Tzeentch well, as despite their equal share of power, Khorne is the most voracious of the Chaos Gods, and the most likely to swallow the world entirely if not held in check by the Changer of Way's illusory methods.

THE REALM OF DESTRUCTION

A land of war and total annihilation, Khorne's domain stands a testament to his brutality. Shrouded in red mist, the Realm of Destruction chokes with the ashes of the dead. As the day passes upon the Frozen Heart's surface, Khorne's legions nip at Tzeentch's heels, tearing down his crystal towers to replace them with mounds of skulls and crude stone temples soaked with the blood of the fallen. Bloodthirsters lead strikes into the coloured lands of Tzeentch, claiming the heads of any mutant foolish enough to stand against the Blood God's horde while Flesh Hounds stalk through the shattered ruins of Tzeentch's domain, hunting down any that try to hide from Khorne's wrath.



Khorne's rage knows no limit, yet within his domain, his ceaseless fury is a double-edged sword. Whilst his blood-spattered legions pour into the edges of Tzeentch's realm, those still in the centre of his lands turn on one another in contests of brutality and murder. Champions rise and fall as the day passes, each one taking the skulls of the warrior before him until the dead outnumber the living. As the influence of Slaanesh approaches, these lost souls fall to obsessive blood rituals and other forms of devotion that take them further from the slaughter, playing into the hands of the sweet encroaching darkness. Like with Tzeentch's trickery, Khorne's own destructive nature stops him from claiming the Frozen Heart for himself, and his insatiable need for greater acts of slaughter pushes his forces ever forward, leaving a broken land of misery in his wake.

THE REALM OF OBSESSION

Whispering seductively to the dregs of Khorne's army, Slaanesh offers a release from the torment of battle and a new life of everlasting pleasure. Slaanesh's domain is unusually dark, thick clouds of perfume and screams of ecstatic torture filling the air as the Frozen Heart turns to claim the blasted lands destroyed by Khorne's fury. Reshaped through Slaanesh's will into a land of excess, glistening meadows and calm waterfalls form from where rivers of blood and fields of crushed skulls once lay. Vast herds of Slaaneshi Steeds run to and fro, seeking new experiences to devour. Slaanesh's minions lovingly convert the ruins of Khorne's temples into luscious torture chambers and sickening pleasure dens. Tended by Daemonettes, the shrines to hedonism consume the population of insane mutants, leaving them unable to move from the crashing waves of sensation that fill every waking moment.

In a cruel twist of irony, the incessant need for greater and more extreme sensations leads to the very downfall of Slaanesh's minions. As the Frozen Heart's cycle moves into its final stage, both mortal and Daemon alike quickly lose interest in their current state of being and obsess over the search for new sensations, rather than the sensations themselves. Monuments to the Prince of Pleasure's glory remain half-finished, and those left mutilated and crippled from the pleasure pits wither and wail in agony as their masters seek greater excesses of depravity. Left behind by the very god that assured them eternal pleasure, these pathetic wretches lack the power to resist the promises of the god that follows in Slaanesh's wake—Nurgle.



THE REALM OF DESICCATION

Like a hungry beast starved of nourishment, Nurgle's pawns fall upon the lands of Slaanesh with ravenous desire. As the Frozen Heart enters its final stage, the quarter of the world that once echoed with the cries of excess falls before a foetid tide of disease and decay. The pathetic creatures that remain from Slaanesh's worst excesses fall quickly while plagues of flies and noxious gasses sweep aside the Pleasure Prince's sickly sweet perfumes. Waves of Nurglings overwhelm the foolish few that seek to maintain Slaanesh's hold on the land as swooping Plague Drones pick off stragglers and deposit them in enormous cauldrons of bubbling disease. The meadows and waters that once enticed thousands rot and curdle, forming swamps and bogs. Tended with great care, Great Unclean Ones watch over their gardens as rotting mutants sally forth to spread Nurgle's gifts.

For the brief time that Nurgle holds sway, the lands under his control remain still. Diseases brew and spread as putrefaction renders everything created and destroyed during the previous cycles to sludge. The joyous laughter of Nurgle's servants and the buzz of billions of flies fill the air. Only those truly dedicated to Nurgle survive in such a corrupted place, with Tzeentch alone holding the power to create life from such overwhelming stagnation and death as the cycle begins anew.

MADDENING HEIGHTS

Separated from the daily maelstrom of renewal and death, the northern pole's barren landscape might appear as refuge to those desperate to escape, but any hope this false reprieve offers vanishes as the madness of the region takes hold. Survival in this bleak environment is next to impossible as dry choking dust claims any who stumble, and rotting, half-buried corpses litter the landscape. However, those that somehow survive face a fate worse than death as their bodies coil and morph, splitting apart and reforming into unnatural shapes. Soon the Warp overwhelms these poor souls, reducing them to the lowest of the Warp's creations—Chaos Spawn.

REALM OF THE WARPED

Mindless and insane, Spawn gallop, slide, burrow, and glide across the pole, devouring one another not out of hunger but simply the unconscious need to survive. In most places, Spawn exist for a brief moment, the energies of their transformation quickly burning out, but upon the blasted planes of the northern pole, these wretches thrive. Once servants caught in the incessant daily ruin of the Frozen Heart, these Spawn know nothing but the torture of their existence and the scorn of the Ruinous Ones.

Chaos Spawn (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
35	01	66	63	22	03	16	25	01	--

Movement: 9/18/27/54†

Armour: None

Skills: Athletics (S) +20, Awareness (Per).

Talents: Furious Assault, Swift Attack, True Grit.

Traits: Deadly Natural Weapons, Fear (2), From Beyond, Multiple Arms (1d10), Regeneration (1d5), Size (1d5+3), Stuff of Nightmares, Unnatural Strength (6), Unnatural Toughness (6).

Weapons: Claws, pincers, beaks, vicious maws, etc. (Melee; 1d10+12 R; Pen 0; Tearing).

Touched by the Gods: The profile above represents a fairly typical Unaligned Chaos Spawn. However some Spawn retain their identity as servants to a particular Chaos God, ensuring servitude even in their final moments. The GM can modified the Spawn to match one of the following four types of Spawn, adding the rules listed below to the base profile. In any instance where the same rule repeats, take the higher value.

†A Spawn's Movement values change depending on its Size, Agility Bonus, and other modifiers.

Bloodbeast (Khorne)

Enraged creatures of pure muscle and sinew, Bloodbeasts seek only to devour and destroy; anything to please the god that abandoned them.

Talents: Flesh Render, Frenzy, Lightning Attack.

Traits: Brutal Charge (6), Natural Armour (6).

Painleech (Slaanesh)

A gift for foolish champions that experience too many sensations at once, the Painleech perceives anything and everything around them to an excruciating level, filling the Spawn's last moments with an agony beyond reason.

Talents: Heightened Senses (All), Lightning Reflexes.

Traits: Fear (4), Unnatural Agility (6), Unnatural Perception (6).



Foulspawn (Nurgle)

Followers of Nurgle reduced to Spawndom seem to survive far longer than other Spawn, almost as if the Plague Father takes some unnatural joy in their existence.

Traits: Crawler, Regeneration (2d5), Toxic (3), Unnatural Toughness (8).

Enveloping Abominations: Most Foulspawn attempt to envelop those around them, drawing unfortunate victims into their sticky disease-ridden mass. Foulspawn gain a +30 bonus to Tests to Grapple enemies and inflict an additional 2d5 Damage when using the Damage Opponent option of the Grapple Action. A Foulspawn that kills an adversary while Grappling it increases its Regeneration Trait to Regeneration (2d10) and removes all levels of Fatigue it is currently suffering.

Firewurm (Tzeentch)

The most pitiable of Spawn, Firewyrms seek nothing but an end to their malformed existence. The playthings of Tzeentch, Firewyrms mutate endlessly, taking on whatever aspects the Weaver of Fates desires until the Spawn's hideous form explodes from the strain. This ever-shifting torture makes Firewyrms virtually impossible to destroy, as injuries fade or morph in a matter of moments.

Traits: Fear (3), Hoverer (9), Phase.

Weapons: Blazefire (Basic; 30m; S/—/—; 1d10+9 E; Pen 6; Felling [4], Flame, Melta).

Writhing Transformation: Unlike other Spawn, a Firewurm does not have the Regeneration Trait (remove this Trait from the list of its Traits), and its Wounds is lowered to 18. However, at the start of each of its Turns, remove all Damage from the Firewurm.

Fiery Demise: 1d5 Rounds after a Firewurm dies, its corpse detonates in a pillar of shimmering flame; it inflicts a single hit for 6d10 Damage with a Penetration of 24 and the Flame Quality upon each target within 3 metres.

CHAOS SPAWN AS MINIONS

Heretics may take a single Chaos Spawn as a Minion of Chaos. Heretics may take Spawn dedicated to Chaos Gods even if they remain Unaligned, and may even take Spawn opposed to their own Alignment (so, a Heretic dedicated to Slaanesh can take a Bloodbeast, for instance). Spawn are not easily acquired, however, and must either be found or created.

THE LOST AND THE FOUND

Areas of high Warp energy (especially places like the Frozen Heart and other worlds of the Lower Vortex) are ideal for locating Chaos Spawn. Places with high concentrations of sorcerers tend to act as good areas to find Spawn, either due to the sorcerers that create Spawn or Sorcerers that draw too much energy from the Warp and find themselves cursed with Spawndom. Once found, a Heretic must use the Wrangling rules as part of a **Survival (Per) Test** (BLACK CRUSADE Core Rulebook, pages 110-111) to increase the Spawn's Disposition. Spawn start at the Mutinous Disposition, and all Tests to Wrangle are **Hard (-20)** in addition to any Disposition modifiers. Players with access to **THE TOME OF FATE** may attempt a Ritual of Bonding to further cement their hold over the Spawn.

CHAOTIC CREATION

Creating a Chaos Spawn is far less precise, as no two Spawn are alike. A Heretic must find someone to turn into a Chaos Spawn and infuse them with the power of the Warp to create an overwhelming number of mutations. Heretics that find a way to increase an NPC's Corruption to 100 turn that NPC into a Spawn. Once this occurs, the NPC ceases to exist and instead becomes a Chaos Spawn. NPCs Aligned to a particular Chaos God gain the benefits of the specific type of Spawn listed in the rules for Spawn (see page 120). Daemons cannot be turned into Spawn.

BRIEF CANDLE

The life of a Chaos Spawn is usually very short. It takes great care to maintain a Spawn for any length of time, making them temporary Minions at best. Every Round (or minute, outside of combat) that a Chaos Spawn fails to attack an adversary, it gains 1 level of Fatigue. Once it reaches a number of levels of Fatigue equal to its Toughness Bonus, the Spawn dies automatically. Spawn cannot rest to reduce Fatigue, although a Spawn's master (if it has one) can reduce the Spawn's levels of Fatigue by sating its hunger (drenching it in fresh blood for a Bloodbeast, administering electric shocks to a Painleech, and so on) and passing a **Hard (-20) Willpower Test**, reducing the Spawn's current levels of Fatigue by 1 for every Degree of Success. The GM has final say on what constitutes "feeding" the Spawn. Spawn do not gain levels of Fatigue this way within the Lower Vortex.

FRIGID DEPTHS

The Frozen Heart's southernmost reaches look peaceful to those clawing their way out of the daily trials of the Dark Gods, but this could not be further from the truth. A frozen landscape of jagged irregular hills and sharp obsidian crevices, the southern pole hides some of the Daemon World's most terrifying secrets. Mortals that drag themselves to the southern region usually perish within hours, but not from the flocks of Furies that whirl through the ashen skies or to the writhing masses of half-formed Warp entities that slither and scuttle through the black, choking snow. Instead, most fall prey to the mortals that came before, a host of dim shades that drift silently towards their victims, their hollow eyes filled with fury and bloodlust.

LOWEST OF THE LOW

The Frozen Heart plays host to the basest Daemonic entities of the entire Vortex. Despicable knots of teeth, claws, and malformed bodies, these creatures exist as madness incarnate; the Warp at its most raw. Like a living tide, these Gibbering Masses bubble up from the southern pole's deepest regions to smother anything that lingers in one place for too long. They fear nothing, and multiply like living cells before reaching a critical mass and dissolving into the frozen crystals, rendering the snow the colour of ancient ash and incredibly deadly to the touch, for it quickly eats through anything it touches.

Gibbering Mass (Troop)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
25	01	20	25	40	05	25	25	01	--

Movement: 2/4/5/12

Armour: None

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20.

Talents: Fearless, Takedown.

Traits: Burrower (4), Critical Mass (Horde Only)[†], Daemonic (3), Deadly Natural Weapons, Fear (2), From Beyond, Size (2), The Stuff of Nightmares, Warp Instability.

Weapons: Tiny Claws and Mouths (Melee; 1d10+2 R; Pen 2; Corrosive, Crippling [2]).

[†]**Critical Mass:** At the beginning of each Round, the GM rolls 1d10 and adds that to the Gibbering Mass Horde's current Magnitude (if it is being used as a Horde). This can increase the Horde above its starting Magnitude. If the Gibbering Mass Horde's Magnitude ever exceeds double its starting value, the entire Horde dissolves into the ground, covering an area 20 metres in diameter. Any creature that begins its Turn in this area suffers 2d10 Impact Damage, ignoring armour.

[†]*Gibbering Masses are intended to be used as a Horde, as described on page 348 of the BLACK CRUSADE Core Rulebook. The profile above represents a single creature.*

GRIM GUARDIANS

Records scattered across the Vortex claim that deep within the Frozen Heart lays a device of immense power. Spoken of as some unknowable dynamo, many believe it keeps the Vortex moving and that without it the Vortex would burn itself out in moments. Like the Frozen Heart itself, even the most oft-repeated tales contradict one another with some claiming the dynamo is an ancient machine of alien construction, while others describe it as the first Daemon Engine, infused with the power of four warring Greater Daemons. Others insist the Warp itself created the device, and that it is a mighty Chaos jewel unattainable by mortal hands—a glittering reminder that the true extent of divine power ever hangs just out of reach of all mortals who seek to claim it. Still more wicked whisperers postulate that it is a test, a challenge put forth by the Chaos Gods to their followers, with one simple goal: to winnow the weak from the strong, and give aspiring champions a rock upon which their limitless desires can crash, an unforgiving cliff that shatters their bodies and souls. Whatever this unhallowed relic truly is, tens of thousands have died in its pursuit, and none can claim to have ever laid eyes upon it and lived to reveal its nature.

Despite the contradictory tales, one common thread runs among them. Many tales of glory and doom point towards the Frozen Heart's southern pole as the entrance to wherever the dynamo exists, and almost every tale recounts the terrifying wardens that converge on all who dare approach this entryway. Described by the inhabitants of the Screaming Vortex as restless ghosts or ætheric echoes of aeons long-past, these shadows take the form of fallen heroes and damned heretics. Silent, implacable, and seemingly unstoppable, they power towards their victims and leave nothing behind except the eternally resounding screams of the dead.

Shadow Host (Elite)

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
35	34	62	61	51	36	34	45	06	--

Movement: 6/12/18/36

Wounds: 46

Armour: None

Total TB: 6

Skills: Awareness (Per), Dodge (Ag) +10, Stealth (Ag) +20.

Talents: Fearless, Preternatural Speed, Swift Attack.

Traits: Dark-Sight, Fear (3), From Beyond, Hoverer (6), Phase, Size (5), The Stuff of Nightmares, Warp Instability.

Weapons: Ætheric Blade (Melee; 1d10+6 E; Pen 8; Crippling [3], Warp Weapon), Coldfire Blast (Basic; 15m; -/3/-; 1d10+4 E; Pen 0; Felling [2], Warp Weapon).

Consuming Dread: Shadow Hosts loom over their targets, sapping their victim's will to survive before moving in for the kill. Any character against which a Shadow Host makes a Charge Action must make a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test**. If it fails, the target suffers 1d10 Willpower Damage, plus 1 additional Willpower Damage for every Degree of Failure by which he failed the Test.

Spectral Nightmare: Shadow Hosts defy most attempts at explanation and destruction alike. Even if vanquished, they have a tendency to return, slipping out from the corners of one's eye and back into reality to menace their prey once again. 1d5 Rounds after a Shadow Host is vanquished, roll 1d10; on a result of 9 or 10, the Shadow Host returns to existence 1d10 metres behind the character who last dispersed it. On any other result, the Shadow Host does not reform—yet.



THE ASCENDANT SPIRAL

"They are all dead, yet I alone live. What was it for, oh Dark Ones? To show me your power? To break me? No! You have taught me vengeance, and I shall put an Imperial world to the torch for every comrade you took from me!"

—Unknown survivor found within the Donarium
(current whereabouts unknown)

The Screaming Vortex is a verdant hive of legends and mysteries. From Guelph to Aphexis there are more stories of treasure and horror than there are stars in the galaxy. The Ascendant Spiral, the only known way out from the Lower Vortex, holds many mysteries, yet its real secrets remain obscured. The Spiral appears to terminate inside a space station known as the Donarium. This ancient place of unknown construction is the source of many Vortex legends and also where gangs of slave-trading information brokers strive endlessly to capture those that travel through the Spiral so that they might unlock its true purpose.

THE END IS THE BEGINNING

Nestled somewhere between Contrition, Crucible, and the dreaded Frozen Heart, the Ascendant Spiral is neither planet nor Daemon World. The few that talk about their experiences are often unable to recount how they arrived there, or much of what transpired, but they speak of questions, answers, and a test; details all too vague to get a true sense of what really happened.

Many think of the Ascendant Spiral as some sort of escape valve, or a release from the terrors of the Lower Vortex. In reality, the Spiral takes at least as many lives as it saves, and even those who live to see the cold decks of the distant Donarium arrive stripped of anything they possessed. The only common thread among survivors is a renewed hatred for the Imperium of Man, almost as if the Spiral acts to repurpose any who manage to survive the Lower Vortex by focusing their attention outward. Whether this is the Dark Gods protecting the Vortex from any who might claim it as their own, or simply the results of brainwashing or something darker, none truly know. Whatever the case, those that travel the Spiral find a new beginning as they dedicate their entire being to the destruction of the False Emperor's realm.

ALTAR OF THE DAMNED

As old as the Vortex itself, the Donarium sits not far from Q'Sal in a region of space where the Warp is at its weakest. To approaching vessels, it appears abandoned and misshapen, but the Donarium houses thousands of souls, many seeking answers to why the space station exists, and why it acts as the terminus point for the Ascendant Spiral.

Every few days the Donarium shudders as another batch of survivors appear on the station in an event known as the Emergence. No pattern governs their arrival and these lost souls appear almost at random across the entire breadth of the station, often bereft of anything but the clothes on their back. Within minutes, gangs of flesh brokers swoop in to claim the new arrivals. Some gather their wits and repel the vultures, but most fail to comprehend their new surroundings and the gangs quickly restrain and carry them into the tunnels for

interrogation. Many have tried to explain the Emergence and why the Donarium seems to grow a little with each arrival. Sadly, the survivors offer no answers, and most end up as slaves sold to the ships that pass the Donarium daily.

SKIN TRADERS AND RUMOUR MONGERS

Responsible for most of the Donarium's culture, the Flesh Brokers seek only two things: souls to sell and information on the Lower Vortex. Loose collectives of brokers gather to ensure dominance over large territories in the hope that they might claim as many new arrivals as possible during the next Emergence. Fights are common, with the witless survivors usually caught in the middle. Pulled into the twisted network of the Donarium's maddening layout, survivors are pressed for days or weeks for what little knowledge they retain from their time among the Daemon Worlds of the Lower Vortex, and with their secrets bare the brokers sell these broken, vengeful shells as quickly as possible to free up room for the inevitable new arrivals.

Flesh Broker (Elite)									
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel	Inf
35	26	40	33	42	48	32	38	56	25

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 12

Armour: Grisly Hides (All 2)

Total TB: 3

Skills: Athletics (S), Awareness (Per) +10, Charm (Fel) +10, Commerce (Int) +30, Common Lore (Screaming Vortex) (Int) +30, Deceive (Fel) +10, Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Daemonology, Mutants, Pirates, The Warp) (Int) +20, Interrogation (WP) +30, Intimidate (S), Scrutiny (Per).

Talents: Jaded, Technical Knock.

Weapons: Sword (Melee; 1d10+4 R; Pen 0; Balanced), Scrap-Gun (Basic; 25m; S/-/-; 1d10+7 R; Pen 0; Crippling [1], Inaccurate, Primitive [7], Unreliable).



ESCAPING THE LOWER VORTEX

The highly unpredictable currents of the Vortex make navigation and escape through conventional means practically impossible. Heretics trapped in the Lower Vortex might try to reach the Ascendant Spiral, or might find themselves there without any explanation as to how they arrived. The GM should play up the otherworldly and dreamlike nature of the Spiral, how some view it as a place of constant motion whereas others might see it as a realm of stifling silence. Reality should seem faster and slower, all sounds should echo, and the stars above should exist past a hazy veil of thick fog.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Heretics that find themselves within the Spiral eventually meet the Spiral's inscrutable and unknowable keepers. Some may only meet one, others may find themselves surrounded, and the GM should emphasise how the Heretics each see things differently even when standing right next to one another. The keepers ask each Heretic questions relating specifically to the Heretic—their secrets, their fears—and things that no one but the Heretics could know. The GM should introduce roleplaying opportunities tailored to his group of Heretics, specifically relating to their goals, actions, allegiance, any pacts they have formed. The Heretics must answer truthfully or find themselves eternally trapped within the Spiral.

THE TEST

The Spiral's keepers also test the Heretics, placing them individually into situations that test their resolve, their devotion to Chaos, and their hatred towards the Imperium. The GM should make these scenarios as personal as possible—such as testing a Khornate Renegade against unrelenting odds, or pitting a Nurglesque Apostate against a Tzeentchian Sorcerer in a war of words to sway a crowd of cultists—anything that pushes the Heretics to the limit of their abilities. Again the GM should emphasise the dreamlike nature of the tests, throwing unnatural elements into the ordeal.

DARK LABYRINTH

Heretics that pass the test awaken aboard the Donarium with little knowledge of what just happened. The Heretics still have their clothing and armour, and must choose one weapon to keep, but automatically lose the remainder of their weapons and equipment except for anything the GM deems vital (e.g. Cybernetics and bionics). The Heretics appear in various places across the Donarium, and within five minutes of their arrival must fight off several Flesh Brokers (1d5–3 per human Heretic and 1d5+1 per Chaos Space Marine) with a Surprise Round for the first Round of combat. The Flesh Brokers want to capture the Heretics, not kill them, as they want information about the Lower Vortex. Heretics that defeat or escape the Flesh Brokers can attempt to find one another by taking a **Very Hard (–30) Navigate (Surface) (Int) Tests** every half hour as they move around the space station. Once the Heretic scores 5 cumulative Degrees of Success they locate another Heretic, until all the Heretics find one another. Failure on any Test by 3 or more Degrees results in another Flesh Brokers attack. Once the Heretics have found each other they can make their way off the Donarium however they choose: ships arrive at the space station almost hourly, making passage off the station very easy.

BURNING VENGEANCE

The Heretics that survive the experience gain 2d10 Infamy and the Hatred (The Imperium) Talent, covering all Imperial institutions (Adeptus Astartes, Imperial Guard, and so on). Like a dream, the Heretics should remember almost nothing of their ordeal within the Spiral. Attempts to remember require a **Hellish (–60) Intelligence Test**, and the GM chooses what part of the ordeal the Heretic remembers. Heretics with the Trade (Remembrancer) Skill gain a +30 bonus on this Test. The GM should make it clear that the ordeal within the Ascendant Spiral changes some of the Heretics' core motivations. Although unexplainable, the Heretics' primary goal should change to the destruction of the Imperium and their actions and plans from this point forward should reflect the desire to head out into the galaxy and slaughter the False Emperor's minions for the glory of Chaos.





THE HEART OF THE VORTEX

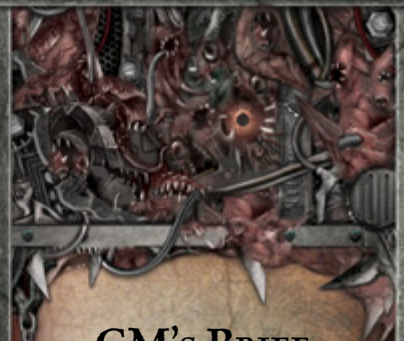
GM's BRIEF

•
DECAY

•
DEATH

•
REBIRTH

•
THE WAGES
OF SIN





CHAPTER IV: THE HEART OF THE VORTEX

"All flows to this point, descending down the sides of this wretched whorl. Darkest bile, sallow pus, and rotting blood drip down the sides and mingle in the death pit. But something rises from the frozen mass, from the creeping heart of treachery. Is it bound by this eternal moment? Or can it see beyond the edge of the circle, the lie of life and illusion of death?"

—Ahleir, Seer of Guelph

The **Heart of the Vortex** is a **BLACK CRUSADE** adventure in which the Heretics travel to the planet of Mire and face the judgement of the Plague God Nurgle. The adventure explores the themes of decay, death, and rebirth—the essential essence of this particular Ruinous Power. In order to earn the Plague Father's blessings and progress on the Path to Glory to the very heart of the Screaming Vortex, the Heretics must face their greatest challenge yet. They must confront and overcome their own mortality to be reborn into the full grandeur of Chaos.

The Heart of the Vortex presents the players with a particularly difficult challenge, one that they are unlikely to have faced before. For this reason, readers that might at some point in the future form part of a player group undertaking this mission should not read any further. This is, of course, true of all published adventures, but particularly so in **The Heart of the Vortex**, as Game Masters will discover within.

GM'S BRIEF

"Don't think of it as dying and rotting! It is glorious fermentation! That is our purpose, children of the Plaguefather. Your end is countless beginnings and countless ends, circling each other eternally, watched by our blessed patron!"

—Hovit, Lord of the Brackish Depths,
before vanishing into the depths of Mire

This section of **The Heart of the Vortex** provides the Game Master with a summary of the story so far and an overview of the adventure's plot. Using this information, the GM can provide as much or as little detail as he feels the players need to get started, and then plunge the Heretics straight into the climactic challenges they must face in on the putrid world of Mire.

Before reading this section it is recommended that the Game Master familiarises himself with the setting of Mire. This planet of decay and disease is introduced in the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, and further details of its history, themes, and masters is to be found on pages 111–116 of this volume. **The Heart of the Vortex** takes place on the wretched, filth-ridden surface of Mire, where the Priornites strive to create the most virulent concoctions to the greater glory of Nurgle. One of these Priornites is fated to facilitate the Heretics' rise to power, but only if they can prove themselves worthy of the ultimate gifts.

THE STORY THUS FAR

The Priornites of Mire are a caste of sorcerer-kings that feed upon the cerebral matter of their subjects and, in so doing, make themselves hosts for the most virulent and delightful of Nurgle's blessings. Only the strongest Priornites survive for long, for their rivals are ever seeking new means of casting down their peers in an eternal cycle of growth, decay, death, and rebirth. For the Mirens, this ceaseless struggle is the supreme act of devotion to the Plague God Nurgle and they have little or no desire to transcend it or to seek power elsewhere within the Screaming Vortex. The Heretics, however, each of them well travelled along the Path to Glory, seek to harness the staggering reservoir of power built up on Mire over countless generations, to use the Priornites as a means of gaining the favour of Nurgle and in so doing take the final, and by far the most harrowing, step in their journey.

Having set foot upon the mist-shrouded, stinking ground of Mire, the Heretics attract the attentions of several natives, including the inscrutable Thanator, a high-ranking Priornite of Mire who is said by many to hold the favour of a number of Nurgle's Daemonic lieutenants (see page 116 for the Priornite Thanator's profile). This individual has the power to bestow the Heretics the boon they seek, but will only do so if they can prove themselves worthy of the Plague God's blessings. To prove themselves fit, the Heretics must submit to the greatest trial they have faced in their long journey along the Path to Glory—they must go willingly to their own deaths, trusting that the Dark Gods will carry them through the heart of the Screaming Vortex where the greatest of heroes who failed reside yet, and to be reborn in the full, unfettered glory of Chaos.

If the Heretics master their own mortality, they are granted the power they desire. They may even gain the ultimate gift that all Aspiring Champions strive towards—Apotheosis. But such a fate must never be sought hastily, for the vast majority that reach the end of the Path to Glory falter even as they take the very last step. Judged unworthy, such unfortunates descend into madness and damnation as their souls are torn asunder and their bodies are mutated beyond all recognition. Doomed, they become mindless, thrashing Chaos Spawn, ever to serve the whims of whatever masters choose to drive them to war in pursuance of their own ambitions and desires.

Such is the final challenge that awaits the Heretics in **The Heart of the Vortex!**

ADVENTURE PLOT

The Heart of the Vortex is an adventure in two parts. The first part sees the Heretics arrive on the world of Mire in search of the blessings of the Plague God, a boon they must earn if they are to complete their quest for power and take their places as the mighty warlords they each believe they are destined to become. In this section, the Heretics encounter numerous servants of Nurgle and face the many threats of everyday existence on Mire. What they are unlikely to realise, however, is that they are being watched all the while, the inscrutable gaze of the Thanator, Priornite of Mire, upon them throughout. If and when the Thanator wills it, the Heretics are made aware of his presence and invited to attend him. Then the real challenge can begin.

As a Priornite of Mire, the Thanator sits at the apex of a pyramid of fell power, its foundations made of the rendered souls of the countless generations of cerebral cannibals who have preceded him. Each generation has imbibed the brain matter of the last, and in so doing inherited the sorcerous abilities, along with the memories of their predecessor, but also the countless aggregated curses and side-effects of such a concentration of blessings. The Thanator has gained the power to speak directly to Daemons that serve Nurgle, and he is able to act as a combination of oracle and agent of the Plague God's Greater Daemons, speaking with their voice and perceiving something of the ascended plane of existence on which they dwell. This august lord of rot and reclamation knows that this power is not granted him for his own benefit and that it will prove his undoing. It has been revealed to him that the sole reason for his existence is to harness the power of every generation of Priornites before him and to concentrate it into a single act of transference to another, who he himself must judge worthy to receive such an unimaginable blessing. It is the judgement of the bestowing of that blessing that forms the second part of the adventure, and potentially heralds the climax of the Heretic's journey along the Path to Glory.

In the second part of the adventure, the Heretics are confronted with the ultimate trial. Should they wish to claim the blessings of Nurgle, they must face his servants, from the invisibly small to the largest and most destructive. In all likelihood, the Heretics, and indeed the players, will not immediately perceive the full extent and nature of the challenge and so the Heretics will likely fight for all they are worth to avoid death. But this is entirely the point—only by transcending death and proving themselves worthy of rebirth can the Heretics truly ascend to the next tier of power.

In short, the Heretics must die in order to be reborn, at which point the Game Master can conclude matters or, should he wish, make use of the rules for Apotheosis (see pages 63–73) or Spawndom (see pages 120–121) found elsewhere in this volume. The Heretics' ultimate fate depends on their actions, and the story that the GM and players decide to tell together.



BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

As with any **BLACK CRUSADE** adventure, there are numerous ways a band of Heretics can be introduced to the narrative. Usually, the adventure forms part of an ongoing campaign and so the Game Master must integrate it with other encounters, possibly carrying over some of the narrative themes already established with the plan to develop them further still. Not every adventure has to be seamlessly interwoven into the overarching narrative, however, and it is perfectly acceptable to take a break from the established flow of events to get the Heretics involved in an adventure that might at first appear little more than a diversion. In time, the events of this adventure can be threaded back into the ongoing story, creating a whole new strand that the Game Master can pick up as he and the players feel is appropriate.

The adventure opens with the Heretics arriving at Mire as a group, but exactly how and why this happens is left largely up to the Game Master. If the GM has access to **THE TOME OF EXCESS**, it might be that the Heretics are fresh from their encounter with the pirates of the Ragged Helix in **At the Edge**, the adventure found in that volume. Conversely, many other episodes in the ongoing story might have been told since then, or this might actually be the first adventure the group has played. In any case, the Game Master should consider giving some thought to how and why the Heretics come to Mire. With a little forward planning, the group can learn about the existence of the Priornites of Mire and in so doing seek them out for themselves. They could be overtly advised or instructed to go to the planet, perhaps by a trusted ally (at least as trusted as any ally is in the Screaming Vortex) or as the price for some boon or service. It is entirely acceptable to begin the adventure in medias res, with the Heretics already having come to Mire, simply by following the Path to Glory towards the centre of the Screaming Vortex. Such is the nature of that unreal realm, where no Aspiring Champion may circumvent any of the numerous challenges that face him along the way.

With Mire being so deep in the Screaming Vortex, this adventure is most appropriate to an established group of Heretics rather than one just starting out along the Path to Glory. Ideally, **The Heart of the Vortex** should be played at or near the end of a campaign, for it culminates in the Heretics potentially ascending out of the Screaming Vortex and launching a Black Crusade against the hated Imperium. Game Masters wishing to set the adventure earlier in a campaign will have to adjust events according to their intended narrative.

It is also possible that new Player Characters are being introduced into an ongoing campaign, perhaps as replacements for Heretics that stumbled along the Path to Glory and lost their lives (or their sanity) in a previous adventure. In this case, with the campaign reaching its critical point the Game Master might like to consider allowing or encouraging players to select the Miren Death Priest Archetype (see page 38), and possibly allowing them to start at a higher level by allocating them additional Experience Points to spend at character creation. Exactly how much is up to the Game Master, but an ideal amount is probably just below the level of the lowest ranked Heretic in the group.

THE QUESTION OF CHAOS

The Heart of the Vortex is set on the planet of Mire, a world entirely in the sway of the Ruinous Power Nurgle, the Father of Plagues. Every aspect of the world is steeped, sometimes literally, in the corruption of the Plague God, a factor that presents both the Game Master and the players with a number of specific challenges, especially in the case of Heretics devoted to a Ruinous Power other than Nurgle. However, this should be seen as an opportunity for some highly engaging encounters and interactions and well illustrates the nature of the challenges that truly dedicated Aspiring Champions must overcome as they walk the Path to Glory. While many Heretics ultimately devote themselves to but a single one of the Ruinous Powers, others seek the blessing of each in turn, proving themselves truly worthy as masters of every peril such a path presents. Only the strongest and most determined succeed in this perilous endeavour, for the Ruinous Powers are as fickle as they are unconcerned with the cares of mere mortals. It is important for the Game Master to keep in mind that this adventure focuses on the trials and challenges of the servants of Nurgle and so those dedicated to other Chaos Gods might have a steeper hill to climb. Inevitably however, the Heretics must confront a range of such challenges as they progress along the Path to Glory and each will have their own, unique trials to overcome. This is especially true if the Heretics have already played through the adventures to be found in the other supplements of this series of books, and so those dedicated to Nurgle are about to have their moment of glory, the others already having had their own.

If the Game Master wishes, he can use the following secondary objective to provide those Heretics dedicated to a power other than Nurgle with some specific, additional missions and motivations. This is particularly relevant to the followers of Tzeentch. These schemers of plots and weavers of the most intricate of webs are likely to find the prospect of an entire world of decay anathema to their very nature and they would need a very good reason indeed to visit such a place. The Path to Glory is that reason.

Because a Heretic dedicated to another power might find himself at a disadvantage at various points in the adventure, it is only fair he should have some means of restoring the balance. The following provides a number of optional, personal goals player characters might like to pursue, along with the rewards for attaining them. Note that attaining his Personal Goal means the Player does not suffer the usual Penalty for failing the Compact. Players and Game Masters are, of course, encouraged to invent further goals and motivations as befits the player characters and the ongoing campaign narrative.

Lastly, the Game Master might like to consider whether it is appropriate to discuss each of these goals with the individual player before playing the adventure. Keeping the goals of each Heretic secret is likely to add a further level of engagement to the narrative, especially where they work against the interests of the whole group. Such internecine struggle is entirely appropriate to the game and a challenge those that walk the Path to Glory must master if they are to claim the ultimate prize.

CHARACTERS DEDICATED TO TZEENTCH

Those that follow the winding path of the God Tzeentch often find themselves at odds with the servants of the Plague God. Where Tzeentch seeks to build impossibly intricate webs of power, Nurgle delights in bringing these crashing down, so that new growth can spring up in their wake. This eternal struggle between evolution and decay makes Tzeentch and Nurgle ancient rivals, and their followers are often at odds with one another. A servant of Tzeentch who finds himself forced to tread the stinking ground of Mire will feel his power and ambition smothered by the cloying stink of the grave, his schemes ever on the brink of being dragged downward into the all-consuming muck.

Personal Goal: The final judgement that takes place at the climax of **The Heart of the Vortex** presents characters dedicated to Tzeentch, the Changer of the Ways, with a chance to prove the ultimate knowledge, power, and reach of their ever-scheming master.

Additional Rewards: If a Heretic dedicated to Tzeentch manages to use his cunning to outdo at least one other Heretic during the final judgement (such as by killing more enemies than a follower of Khorne by using his Psychic Powers, preventing a follower of Slaanesh from suffering a Critical Effect, or surviving longer than one of Nurgle's blessed thanks to illusory tricks), he gains 1d10–1 additional Infamy at the end of the encounter as a reward for having his schemes come to fruition.

CHARACTERS DEDICATED TO KHORNE

Those who dedicate themselves to the Blood God value the moment of the kill above all else, the deed of striking the opponent down and casting his steaming viscera upon the thirsty battleground the ultimate act of devotion. The followers of the Plague God kill in myriad ways, many of which the followers of Khorne find frustratingly and unnecessarily indirect. One dedicated to the Blood God might find himself consumed by anger if he is unable to confront his foe directly, and supremely disdainful towards any ally, follower, or foe who attempts to poison and infect rather than striking the enemy down with brute strength as the Lord of Slaughter intended.

Personal Goal: The final judgement at the culmination of **The Heart of the Vortex** represents a perfect opportunity for Heretics dedicated to Khorne to prove themselves masters of war and bloodshed in all its forms.

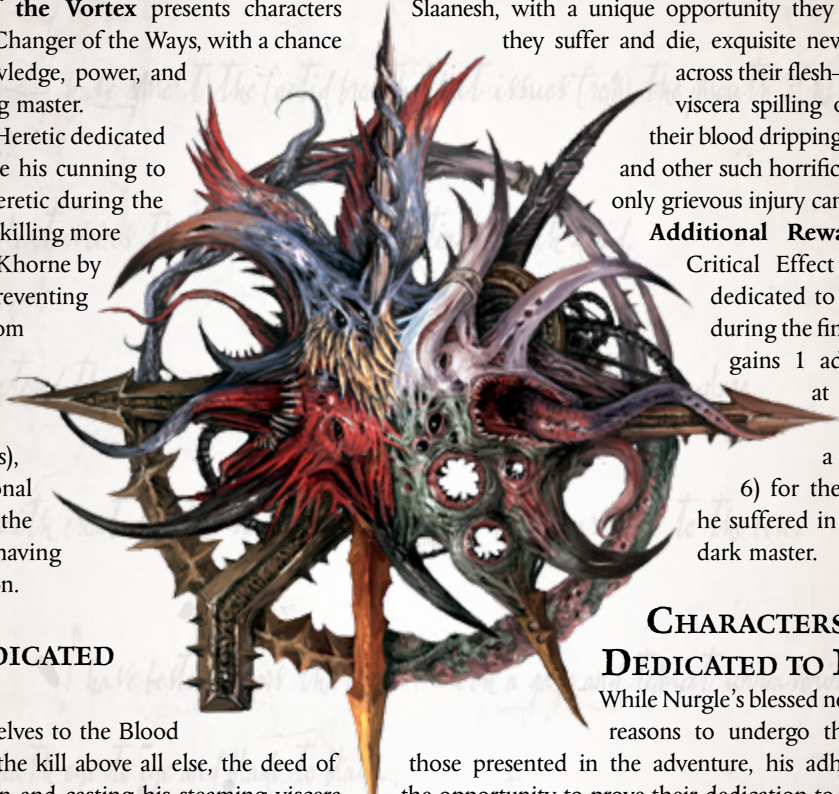
Additional Rewards: If a Heretic dedicated to Khorne kills the most foes of all of the Heretics during the final judgement (as determined by the Game Master, as not all foes are equal) he gains 1d5+3 additional Infamy at the end of the encounter as a reward for his service to the Lord of Battles.

CHARACTERS DEDICATED TO SLAANESH

As seekers after the most rarefied heights of experience and perfection, those dedicated to Slaanesh look upon the rampant decay of the realm of Nurgle and see unformed degeneration, the opposite of all they seek. The followers of Slaanesh find the unbounded growth in which those of Nurgle surround themselves as disorder for the sake of it, as wasted opportunity. Where they seek perfection they see in the works of Nurgle raw Chaos, the base matter of the Warp ever shifting and reforming but never attaining the ultimate extremes to which the servants of Slaanesh are dedicated. As such, they find the realms of Nurgle cold and clammy, crude, base and unformed.

Personal Goal: The judgement at the end of **The Heart of the Vortex** presents those dedicated to the Prince of Chaos, Slaanesh, with a unique opportunity they cannot miss. As they suffer and die, exquisite new sensations lash across their flesh—the feel of their viscera spilling out, the scent of their blood dripping down their skin, and other such horrific indulgences that only grievous injury can grant them.

Additional Rewards: For each Critical Effect that a Heretic dedicated to Slaanesh suffers during the final judgement, he gains 1 additional Infamy at the end of the encounter (to a maximum of 6) for the elevating pains he suffered in the name of his dark master.



CHARACTERS DEDICATED TO NURGLE

While Nurgle's blessed need no additional reasons to undergo the trials beyond

those presented in the adventure, his adherents still have the opportunity to prove their dedication to the Plaguefather by persisting longer than any of their allies. By enduring the longest, the children of the Lord of All can reaffirm his supremacy during the final trial, demonstrating that in the end, all must fade and rot in the face of their ruinous patron.

Personal Goal: While Nurgle's devout should know well that the trial in the Mire will be their mortal end, their patron also demands that they endure, and cling to existence for as long as possible. They must struggle even as they despair, and fight on to the bitterest of ends, dying with their god's name escaping their lips as their death rattle. To glorify Nurgle, they must therefore outlive the pawns of the other Ruinous Powers, surviving blows that fell others and laughing in the face of injuries that would kill any other warrior.

Additional Rewards: For each other Heretic involved in the final trial whom a Heretic dedicated to Nurgle outlives during the encounter, he gains 1 additional Infamy (to a maximum of 7) at the end of the encounter.



PART I: DECAY

"I fear no danger, for mine is the hand of wrath! Still, I shall have to slay a great many foes to wash the stench of this place from my armour."

—Kharthal, the Fist of Rage

Whatever the exact circumstances of the Heretics' arrival at Mire, they are immediately struck by the noisome nature of the place. Like all of the worlds of the Inner Ring of the Screaming Vortex, Mire exists in a strange hybrid state between reality and surreality. It is neither a true Daemon World nor a natural stellar body, and the very air and ground feels intensely wrong to the Heretics the moment they arrive. Mire has few permanent settlements and certainly no established port, and most of the natives are intensely fearful, or at least distrusting of outsiders. Those that do not display such reactions are the truly dangerous ones: either Priornites or their servants, or else the dread servants of Nurgle given temporary form by the taint in which the entire world is steeped.

Because Mire has so few permanent settlements, the Heretics are assumed to arrive in a region that is typical of the surface. The following section presents a number of encounters that the Game Master can utilise as the Heretics explore the region in which they have arrived. The GM can use as many or as few of these encounters as he feels is appropriate, with the first part of the adventure concluding with the last, when the Heretics encounter the Priornite Thanator. At that point, the action moves on to the next part, potentially the climax of the entire campaign.

Before running this part of the adventure, it is recommended that the Game Master reacquaint himself with the setting information for the world of Mire given earlier in the book, with particular reference to the nature of the environment and the natives given there. To help set the tone, each of the events is described by a read aloud section, which the Game Master can use to assist the players in visualising the scene.

At some point soon after the Heretics' arrival on Mire, and before they move off to explore their surroundings, the GM should take the time to communicate the repugnant, decayed nature of the world, as described in detail on pages 111–116.

INTO THE MIRE

What follows are a number of encounters that between them convey the main themes of the planet of Mire and offer the Heretics with a number of challenges. Aside from affording the players with an entertaining and challenging experience on Mire, these events serve another, as yet hidden purpose. As the Heretics progress they come to the attention of the Priornite Thanator, and depending how they interact with the world's inhabitants and respond to its hazards, they affect, for better or worse, his view of them. Thus, when at last the Heretics meet the Thanator, he may be ill disposed towards them or look upon them favourably, depending on the preceding chain of events.

Should the Game Master wish, he might like to provide the Heretics with some form of hint or clue that they are being watched and their actions judged. This could take the form of a **Hard (–20) Psyniscience Test** in the case of a Heretic with the suitable skill, or perhaps an **Arduous (–40) Awareness**

TABLE 4-1: UNNATURAL HAZARDS

1d10 Roll Hazard

1-3	Gravity Anomaly: The local gravity field fluctuates as the Warp bleeds through the already stretched skein separating reality from the beyond. The Game Master should decide whether the result is abnormally high or low gravity, and apply the appropriate effects described on page 43 of the BLACK CRUSADE Core Rulebook for the next 1d10 hours. This effect is cumulative with any other encounters rolled during this period.
4-5	Putrid Gas: A pocket of noxious air that has festered since the creation of Mire itself bursts forth. Each Heretic must make a Challenging (+0) Toughness Test or suffer the effects of Suffocation (see page 257 of the BLACK CRUSADE Core Rulebook) until leaving the affected area (a zone of 5d10+20 metres around where the pocket burst).
6-7	Sucking Mud: The going becomes exceptionally hard as brackish liquid swells upwards through the ground. The Heretics suffer a -20 penalty to Agility-based Tests for the next 1d5 hours.
8-9	Entwining Roots: Writhing tendrils lash out from the stinking ground. Each character must make a Hard (-20) Agility Test or suffer 1d10 Rending Damage and fall Prone.
10 or higher	Poisonous Blessings: Everything the Heretics look upon in this region glistens with sickly green contact toxin. Any Heretic who falls, becomes Prone, or touches anything in the environment with bare skin must make a Hard (-20) Toughness Test or roll on Table 2-1: Boons of the Plague God (see page 40) and apply the result.

Test if none of the Heretics has a better Skill. Even if the Heretics fail, it is likely that the players will come to suspect they are being watched or that something is up, in which case they are likely to be put ever more on their guard, and as such the Game Master might like to adjust these Tests accordingly.

Should the Heretics learn that they are indeed being watched, the Game Master should not communicate any specific details just yet. Instead, he should communicate the fact as a feeling of distrust, the fleeting feeling of passing through a gunman's crosshairs or of movement barely registered in the corner of the eye. On a world such as Mire, phenomena such as these are far from unusual, of course, but should serve to build the tension as the encounters progress.

ENCOUNTER 1: UNNATURAL HAZARDS

As they press through the wilderness of Mire, the stinking mists closing in around them and the foetid ground determined to suck them down into the Warp-tainted subsurface, the Heretics are confronted with the first of many hazards to be found on this cursed world. As deadly as any death world, the environment itself attempts to test the intruders' mettle.

Before this encounter, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

The air on Mire is thick, almost glutinous with the myriad contagions of the Plague God and visibility is limited to just a few dozen metres. All about you is a lambent, acid green haze, tendrils of mist occasionally creeping inwards to wrap about your ankles with nigh-sentient intent. The ground is a stinking morass, each step you take causing your feet to sink into a substance neither natural nor artificial, but some delightful confluence of the two.

As you progress, the going gets ever harder. In places, the mud itself swells and rises as if to block your path or funnel you onto a different one and strange shapes loom in the green mists. Things stir in the foetid mud, brushing against your ankles before sinking down once more, and quelling tendrils of mist seek to force themselves into your nostrils as you breathe.

At length, it becomes apparent that the terrain itself is stirring against you, and if you intend to survive or press on any further towards your goal, you must find a way of fighting back!

In order to avoid a slow and painful death amidst the stinking swamps, the Heretics must find their way out of the immediate area, avoiding hazards as they go. To do so, the Game Master should instigate an Extended Test (see page 37 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). The hazardous terrain extends for approximately 30 kilometres in all directions and the conditions are such that **Table 1-6: Treacherous Environment Agility Modifiers** on page 40 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook is used to modify any relevant Skill Tests made. Each of the Heretics should make a **Hard (-20) Survival Test** for every hour of travel. Failure results in a roll on **Table 4-1: Unnatural Hazards**, with +1 to the result for every Degree of Failure by which the Heretic failed.

ENCOUNTER 2: MIREN SWARM

This encounter can be played at any point in this stage of the adventure, and it is perfectly appropriate for it to be used multiple times. As they press ever onwards through the gurgling swamps, their nostrils assaulted by a million different and equally offensive stench, a swarm of beasts begins to track them, for they have stumbled into its hunting grounds.

The exact form of the creatures closing in upon the Heretics is left up to the Game Master, for the foetid, Warp-infused mud that constitutes most of the surface of Mire is host to all manner of inconceivable creatures, from hellish maggot things with tooth-rimmed, lamprey mouths to tides of tangled worm-things that erupt as one from their subterranean nests to consume any being caught in the open above. As a general rule, the swarm consists of several dozen creatures, each creature being an unnatural hybrid with more than a little of the horrific to its nature. To represent this mass of Miren creatures, use the profile for the Nether Swarm on page 351 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook, replacing the Flyer Trait with the Burrower Trait.

The swarm begins closing in upon the Heretics as they pass through its territory, an area that extends for roughly 1 kilometre in all directions. Every 10 minutes or so of narrative time, have the Heretics make an **Opposed Awareness Test** (against the Swarm's Stealth Skill). Success indicate that the Heretics become aware they are being tracked, while failure

results in them being caught unaware if and when the swarm attacks. Whenever one of these Tests is passed, each Heretic gains a positive modifier to his Agility Bonus equal to the Degrees of Success on the Test when calculating Initiative when the swarm attacks. If they fail the Test, the Heretics are automatically Surprised in the ensuing combat.

As the swarm attacks, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

The swamps through which you have been trudging for some time now grow slowly more quiet, the sounds of insects and other, unidentifiable squelches, fading until a preternatural silence seems to blanket the air as thickly as the coiling green mists. At length, other sounds start up, at first distant and then closer, and coming from all directions. Dark forms stir in the fog and the wet ground swells, and soon it becomes evident that you are surrounded by a formless swarm of chittering, scratching, squirming, gnawing... things!

Once the Heretics have passed out of the swarm's territory, the immediate danger is over and the Game Master can proceed to another Encounter, or should he wish, decide that the Heretics have strayed into the hunting grounds of another hungry swarm instead.

ENCOUNTER 3: THE TALLYMAN

While the Miren swarms bubbling up from the surface might be tainted by the Warp and have vile ichor pumping through their stinking veins, other occupants of the surface of Mire are entirely of the Beyond. As such, the servants of Nurgle are wont to appear as if from nowhere, fading into existence according to the fickle tides of the Warp and the waxing and waning of their patrons power. Unlike manifestations in the material universe, on Mire, deep as it is in the Inner Ring of the Screaming Vortex, Daemons do not require a mortal host to possess in order to appear and may do so according to their own, unknowable whims.

As the Heretics press on, they encounter one or more Plaguebearers of Nurgle, as described on page 355–356 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook. To set the scene, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

Marching ever onwards through the acid green fog, you grow aware of a low, sonorous chanting emanating from somewhere up ahead. The sound grows louder as you approach, until at length you begin to discern individual words. Each is name, a word of power spoken in one of the many tongues of the dwellers in the Warp. You may or may not know the exact meaning of each name, but the intent is clear, for at the sound of each, a wave of sickness passes through you, each subtly different from the last. It soon becomes clear that the words are the names of the myriad blessings of the Plague God, and they are being spoken by one of his servants, the so-called "tallymen:" a Plaguebearer.

As you approach still further, you come upon the Daemon. It is a mound of decay, its form vaguely humanoid but its green flesh sloughing from it. Its head bears a single eye and one twisted horn, and its leering mouth is recanting the names of its master's blessings with such joy that it grins and drools with each new utterance. At length, the Plaguebearer senses your approach, and slows its chant before falling silent.

"Speak, mortals," it says. "or depart my master's domain."

Exactly how the Heretics react to the ominous appearance of the Plaguebearer is up to the players. Those dedicated to Ruinous Powers other than Nurgle might be driven to attack it, while others might prefer to avoid contact entirely. Heretics possessed of the blessings of the Plague God might attempt to communicate with the Daemon in some manner and to some end, or even to turn it to their service, for a time at least. The details are left to the players to concoct and the Game Master to accommodate, or not, accordingly.

As with many of the other encounters presented in this part of the adventure, the Game Master can use this one more than once should he wish. He can modify it further by having more than one Plaguebearer present, especially if the Heretics determine to fight it or provoke it.

ENCOUNTER 4: KING OF THE HILL

Wading through the mists and murk, the Heretics come upon a lone native of Mire, squatting upon a rare rise that affords him a view of the surrounding wastes. At the Heretics' approach, the wretch bristles, but unless they make an overtly aggressive move, he does not flee nor abandon his hillock. Should the Heretics attack or show any sign of intending to do so, the wretch flees as fast as he can, and is soon lost in the murk and mist. Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

A low hill rears out of the ever-present, coiling mists—an unusual sight indeed in this flat, foul-smelling landscape. As you approach, the hill resolves in a solid form, nothing more than a slight rise just a dozen or so metres high. Atop it is what appears at first sight to be a small outcrop of rock, but which is soon resolved into a man, hunched over as he watches your approach with insane intensity glowing from its eyes.

If they approach him, the Game Master may use the Interaction rules (see page 276 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook). The native begins the encounter at the Disgusted/Mutinous/Disbelieving/Foolhardy level, and the Heretics must use Charm, Command, Deception, or Intimidate to lower this to at least the Indifferent level in order to question him, should they wish to do so.

Depending on what information the Heretics seek from the native, the Game Master can use him to confer any details or clues he seems necessary. In particular, the native is well aware of the Thanator, and can point or lead them to the Priornite's dwellings. He could also help the Heretics avoid further hazards or answer other questions they might have about Mire, keeping in mind what a lowly individual like this would know of the bigger picture.

Lastly, should the native's Disposition be improved all the way to the Infatuated/Fanatical/Gullible/Terrified level, he willingly comes down from his hillock and prostrates himself before the Heretics, saying he is now their faithful servant. Should they wish to, the Heretics can take the native on as a Minion (or perhaps a wretched mascot of some kind).

ENCOUNTER 5: WAVES OF FILTH

The penultimate encounter need not be played straight after **Encounter 4**, but it certainly works best if it occurs later on at some point. Travelling onwards through a particularly noisome area of swamp, the Heretics are attacked by a large number of Miren natives. If the wretch described in **Encounter 4** is with them, much of the mob's ire is aimed towards him. If the wretch is not with the Heretics, the mob attacks regardless, fired to heights of rage at the intrusion by the outsiders even if assaulting them amounts to little more than suicide.

If and when the Game Master decides to have the mob attack, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

The ever-present sounds of bubbling corruption are supplanted by those of distant shouts of anger, and soon you hear several hundred throats giving voice to phlegmy cries of ire. The mists all about part as a wave of silhouettes closes in, countless mortal natives of Mire coming at you in a seemingly endless wave of filth and rage.

The Mirens attack in a great, maddened wave, yet the eyes of each native are somehow empty and devoid of passion. In truth, the Mirens are being controlled by the Priornite Thanator, who is testing the Heretics' mettle from afar. To run this combat, simply use a Horde based around the Miren Wretch profile (see page 113) with a Magnitude of between 30 and 60, depending on the level of threat the Game Master thinks appropriate to the Heretics. If the Heretics are of such a level or equipped so well that the Horde is defeated too easily, the Game Master should feel free to introduce a second or subsequent wave, but the point of this encounter is more to set the scene than to cause the Heretics any genuine danger, though they need not know that of course.

ENCOUNTER 6: COMETH THE PRIORHITE

Regardless of how many encounters the Heretics have been exposed to since arriving upon the surface of Mire, sooner or later they meet the Thanator. Far from being a chance meeting, the Thanator has been fated this moment not just for his entire life, but throughout countless generations before him. The Thanator sits at the very apex of a pyramid of generational power that has its foundations in the very creation of the world of Mire. With the birth of each successive Priornite and his imbibing of the cerebral matter of the former, the will and power of Nurgle has been filtered, reborn, and propagated, such that the Thanator represents the distilled essence of that will. In short, the Thanator's very existence serves to perform the ritual that will pass judgement on the Heretics, and determine if they are worthy of the blessings they seek.

The best way for the Game Master to introduce the Thanator is to do so at the climax of one of the previous encounters. For example, if the Heretics have encountered the "Waves of Filth" described in the previous event, the moment they defeat the last of the Miren Horde, the Priornite might appear upon the corpse-strewn battlefield, gesturing silently for the Heretics to follow him. Alternatively, if the Heretics are about to be overwhelmed by the Horde, he could appear

at the climactic moment and with a single gesture send the Mirens fleeing into the mists, leaving corpses and silence behind. Perhaps **Encounter 4** could lead the characters to the Priornite, where he waits silently and patiently for the moment he has been preparing for his entire life.

Regardless of the exact circumstances of the meeting, the Game Master can set the scene by reading or paraphrasing the following description aloud:

Standing before you is a tall, gaunt figure, his withered frame clad in rags wrapped tight about its limbs like soiled bandages. His face and hands are pale and glistening, the very sores seeping a cocktail of glistening filth. Despite the myriad maladies afflicting the flesh, the eyes are the darkest pits, portals through which undreamed-of realms of power and ambition are glimpsed. The face turns towards you, the darkness shining forth from those eyes shines upon you more blinding than the brightest of questing arc beams. The shrivelled lips part and a wave of grave-air flows forth.

"I am the Thanator," the figure announces in a voice as of a stone tomb ground open for the first time in a thousand years. "I am your judge, and I am your doom. If you would know your destiny and transcend the Vortex, attend me..."

Exactly how the Heretics react is up to them, but clearly they would be foolish not to follow this creature. Should the players either fail to appreciate the scope of this moment, or (perhaps commendably) decide that their characters would react by attacking the Thanator (see page 116 for his profile), the Game Master might have to think on his feet. Depending on the nature of the Heretics, he might offer them a chance to reconsider, or respond "in game" by requiring a Skill Test to have the character experience a moment of insight or even some foreboding vision. Ultimately, however, the players should remain the masters of their Heretics' fate, and so if they insist on attacking the Thanator the Game Master should allow them to do so and to reap the consequences. Doing so takes the adventure, and indeed the entire campaign in a very different direction, for if the Heretics kill their would-be guide, they have squandered the chance they were about to be offered to gain the blessings of Nurgle and potentially ascend to a higher plane of power—though Heretics dedicated to the divine rivals of the Plague God might find such an outcome pleasing, and even win favours from their respective patrons as a result. If they kill the Thanator, it is recommended that the immediate consequence is the appearance of the Lutomorus (as presented on page 114), the mighty beast drawn to the scene by the death of so fated a soul as the Thanator. If they can defeat this creature or escape it, they will have won a great victory over Nurgle's champions—which might be very rewarding for some Heretics, but bode extremely ill for others. Such actions will certainly make the favour of Nurgle harder to obtain in the future, and the Plague God's other servants might seek to bestow their finest and most terrible diseases upon the Heretics as a result.

Assuming that the Heretics follow the Thanator, it is time to move on to the second part of the adventure.

PART II: DEATH

"Don't you dare say you saw this coming, sorcerer. Your schemes will rot and wither before your eyes, for in the end, the Lord of All claims his toll."

—Death Priest Glug'frath, to Anoxon the Calculating

In Part II of **The Heart of the Vortex**, the Heretics engage with the Priornite Thanator, and are presented with the opportunity to attain in a single moment the power they have been seeking throughout their journey along the Path to Glory. The Thanator addresses them, informing them that he occupies a pivotal fulcrum in their fates, a vital junction in their journey. He acknowledges how far they have come along a path strewn with an

uncountable quantity of corpses left behind by others who have tried to travel the same route and fallen along the way. He warns them that further travel may only be undertaken at great cost, and that should they wish, they may turn around now and avoid that cost.

The Thanator is performing the role for which he and all previous generations of his line were born, and the Heretics have their own part to play in this tale. He seeks to judge the true scope of the Heretics' ambition and to offer them a challenge commensurate to the blessings they seek. Having done so, the Heretics must pay the price expected of them, a price they have no choice but to pay with their very lives.

Game Masters should prepare themselves for running this section by ensuring they are entirely familiar with the chain of events that will unfold within it. The

reason for this is that it presents a gaming challenge that might be novel to both the players and the Game Master, and thus it is particularly important to maintain the action, pace, and tension, and not to get diverted by other concerns. The reason for this is that whatever happens

next, the Heretics are going to die, and the players are not going to know until after the event that they are to be reborn by the power of Nurgle. The players will believe their characters are dead, and so it is very important that the Game Master does not allow the tension to be dispelled by the disappointment of any one player. Rather, he should seek to keep everyone engaged, perhaps having the fallen Heretics' players take control of enemies attacking the survivors or cheering on the last few Heretics in the hopes that they will succeed. This will not happen, of course, but there can be no surer way to demonstrate the true nature of Nurgle than to take the players and their characters through such a journey of death and rebirth.

As exciting as this process can be, especially to experienced and open-minded gaming groups, it might not be for everyone. The Game Master is therefore encouraged to consider whether their particular group of players will enjoy the experience and perhaps prepare an alternative way of running through the events should he deem it necessary. At one end, the Game Master could simply tell the players that their characters are very likely to die, but not worry about losing them for good, for the Chaos Gods still have plans for such promising Heretics.

One possible compromise might be to prime the players before the session gets underway that bad things are likely to happen to their characters, but that they should go along with it until the ending is revealed, as there are events transpiring with ramifications they do not yet fully perceive. Ultimately, each Game Master has more insight into his own group of players than this book can provide, and thus must decide the best way to handle this conundrum for his particular group, whether that means discussing the broad course of events in advance or working through the deaths and rebirths of their characters as they take place during the course of the adventure.



THE JUDGEMENT

Having followed the Thanator, the Heretics enter his domain and must submit to his judgement. When ready, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

Following after the gaunt figure of the Priornite Thanator, the mists close in as never before, so that soon you can barely see his shadow as it plunges through the swamps. You follow for what feels like hours, but may have been moments, sensing strange re-alignments taking place just beyond the boundaries of perception. After what appears an age of trudging through the swamps, massive shapes resolve themselves on either side, the mist slowly clearing to reveal new, twisted forms of life arching overhead. Wherever you are, it clearly is not upon the surface of Mire.

The creeping tendrils of mist, so long your constant companions on this noisome world, disengage and slink away, revealing a sight of stark terror and decaying majesty. You stand in a glade in an impossible forest, the trees rearing hundreds of metres into the air and a green-tinged glow filtering down through unseen boughs. All about you is riotous rot, the trunks of the mighty trees clad in glistening mould as fungal forms twist through and all about. Bloated flies the size of clenched fists buzz lazily through the cloudy air, which as you breath is revealed to be thick with spores and the overwhelming taste of death.

At the last, the Priornite Thanator comes to a halt in the centre of the glade and turns to face you, his hands wide in a gesture of greeting as he bows low and says: "Welcome, travellers. Welcome to the Garden of Nurgle, where you shall meet your judgement, and your doom."

Having set the scene, it is time for the Thanator to reveal the truth of his existence and the meaning for the Heretics' presence in his otherworldly court. Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

"My lords," the Thanator addresses you all. "I must introduce myself formally, so that you might meet your judgement knowingly. I am, as you know, a Priornite, one in whom countless generations of the Plague God's blessings are vested. There are many of us here on Mire, but I am unlike the others. I am the last of my line. Each and every one of my thousand thousand ancestors has imbibed the cranial matter of his forebear, filtering it through his soul to pass on to the next. I am the apex of my line, in whom is vested a single task allocated to us by the Plague Father so long, long ago.

My task, my lords, is to communicate the judgement of the Plague Lord upon your eternal souls and, if he deems you worthy, to shepherd you through the Frozen Heart of the Vortex, and show you the path to your ultimate ambitions.

You may turn now, and go, but I know you will not, for this moment has been known to me and every one of my line since time before time, age before half-dreamt age.

Now is the moment. Each of you, my lords, must speak aloud the true extent of his ambition. But heed my words. Speak only the truth, lest the Great Powers deem you below their note. Speak that which you desire to find at the end of the Path to Glory, and prepare to pay the ultimate price for attaining it!"

Now, the Game Master should ask each player to name the true extent of their ambition as an Aspiring Champion of Chaos. He should allow each a moment to think, but if possible the pace should not be interrupted and he may need to offer some suggestions. The most likely choices are Apotheosis to a Daemon Prince's stature or the resources to launch a Black Crusade out of the Screaming Vortex and into the galaxy at large, but some groups of Heretics might want to consolidate their power within the Vortex first, seeking to become the mightiest warlords of all the competing factions. Other Heretics might conceive of still more unusual ambitions, which in itself still broadly fits the unknowable nature of Chaos. In short, however, the ambitions are likely to conform broadly to one of the following four categories:

APOTHEOSIS

This should be the ultimate aim of any Heretic travelling along the Path to Glory, for otherwise the further he travels the more likely he is to fall foul of the displeasure of one or other of the Chaos Powers. After all, to seek power from the Chaos Gods but not to surrender to them in this manner is a high risk strategy indeed. Should any of the Heretics declare their intent to seek Apotheosis, make a quick note and move on to the next player.

BLACK CRUSADE

It is quite possible that one or more Heretics wish to make war upon the Imperium of Man without courting Apotheosis, perhaps revelling in the very mortal sensations such a deed will make possible. Indeed, it is said of the greatest Black Crusader of all time—Abaddon the Despoiler—that he will not seek his own ascension until the mortal realm is reduced to ashes, and only then will he allow himself to rise to that higher plane and to set behind him his mortal concerns. Should a Heretic declare this as his ambition, make a note and move on to the next.

LORD OF THE SCREAMING VORTEX

In treading the Path to Glory, some Heretics might wish to attain such power that they can pause, turn back for a while, and crush what remains of their foes into the dirt before continuing once more. Should any Heretic declare this ambition, the Thanator's expression darkens and he asks the Heretic to explain himself further and to name those deeds he has yet to perform. The Game Master should make a note of the nature of these deeds and determine if they are suitably grand in scope or little more than petty, mortal concerns, before moving on.

UNKNOWABLE AMBITIONS

Some Aspiring Champions seek things others can never entirely understand, from secret knowledge to utterly forbidden sensation. In truth, even these things can be contextualised as simply steps along the Path to Glory, but the Priornite Thanator's concern is that they do not reveal a fatal lack of ambition to reach the ultimate destination. The Thanator questions the Heretic, requiring him to explain the nature of these concerns and to explain what part they have to play in the attainment of the blessings of the Ruinous Powers. The Game Master should make a note of the Heretic's answers and judge if they are suitably epic in scale before moving on.

THE COST

Having heard and secretly weighed the ambitions of each of the Heretics standing before him, the Priornite Thanator now informs the Heretics of the cost that will be levied upon them to tread any further along the Path to Glory. The Game Master should deliver this information to the players, based on their stated ambition, as follows. Note that this information is split between an “in-character” element and a gaming mechanics element, and so the Game Master should be clear as to which he is communicating when he does so.

APOTHEOSIS

Heretics who declare their objective is to achieve Apotheosis are to be congratulated upon the breathtaking scope of their ambition, or perhaps pitied for the depths of their hubris. The Thanator informs those that declare this ambition that the cost will be high, but they will soon have their chance to prove themselves worthy of that goal.

Any player that states this ambition is offered the chance to be scrutinised by the eye of a god, using the rules for Apotheosis presented on pages 63–73. This is possible even if the player has yet to achieve the Infamy threshold set at the beginning of the campaign. The further the Heretic is from the Infamy threshold, however, the harder it will be for them to prove themselves worthy of the fate they crave. The nature of the challenge should not be revealed in advance of undertaking it. Though it is known only to the Game Master, for every point of Infamy the player is short of the required score to attempt Apotheosis, the group will face an additional number of Daemonic foes in the coming battle.

Only after the challenge is complete and the Heretic has given up his very life is the Apotheosis attempted, the chances of achieving it modified as described on page 140.

BLACK CRUSADE

The Thanator is suitably impressed with any Heretics who declare their intent to raise a Black Crusade against the Imperium, and states that the power needed to do so is within reach, for those who can prove they have the will required to lead such a massive endeavour.

Heretics who declare their intention is to launch a Black Crusade must face the ultimate foes of the Ruinous Powers, albeit phantom conjurations of them summoned into unreality by the power of Nurgle. Compare the Infamy threshold set at the beginning of the campaign to the player’s current level. In the coming challenge, the group will have to face a number of Grey Knights equal to this figure, though they should not be forewarned of this fact. In the (albeit unlikely) event that the Heretics overcome all of these ultimate foes, the player declaring his ambition to launch a Black Crusade will be granted additional allies and resources as described later on.

LORD OF THE SCREAMING VORTEX

The Priornite Thanator understands this ambition perhaps more than the others, for he himself is a product of the Screaming Vortex and has seen countless warlords rise and fall in the endless cycle of favour and fall. He dares not gainsay such an ambition for fear of the consequences should the Heretic succeed in gaining the power he seeks.

Should a Heretic declare his intent to become Lord of the Screaming Vortex, compare his Infamy to the threshold set at the beginning of the campaign. The difference is the number of assassins sent by his foes the group must confront in order to prove themselves worthy of this ambition. As before, the Heretics are not necessarily fighting real assassins sent by real enemies, they could simply be figments of their imaginations or Daemons called forth by the process of facing judgement.

Should the Player Characters succeed in slaying all of the assassins sent against them, the Heretic that declared this ambition will gain a bonus to subsequent adventures, as described later on.

UNKNOWABLE AMBITION

When it comes to receiving other ambitions, the Thanator maintains an implacable manner, for he knows first hand how fickle the whims of Chaos might appear to those not in their unknowable grip. Whatever the Heretics state to be their desire, no matter how outlandish or seemingly petty, he simply nods.

It must be left up to the Game Master to establish the exact nature of the challenge Heretics seeking more esoteric ambitions must face, but an entertaining method (for the GM, at least) would be to have them face an opponent dedicated to denying them the treasures or knowledge they desire. An ideal opponent would be an Eldar Harlequin, and so such Heretics could be required to face a number of these lethal foes equal to the difference between their current Infamy and the Infamy threshold set at the beginning of the campaign. Should the group overcome all of these foes, those Heretics who stated this ambition will gain that which they desire, at least so far as the Game Master decides it is possible to grant their wish.

THE TEST

Having established the nature of each Heretic’s true ambition and determined the degree of the test they are to face by comparing the current Infamy level of each Heretic with the overall threshold set at the beginning of the campaign, the Game Master can move swiftly on to the test itself. This takes the form of a series of encounters with a number of different foes, as determined by the various ambitions stated. The group as a whole must confront each group of (possibly phantasmal, but deadly nonetheless) foes. In the unlikely event that one group is entirely beaten, the action moves on to the next group, as summoned by the ambitions of the next Heretic, until either all of the Heretics are dead or they have defeated all of the challenges. Even then, however, the foes come ever on until at length, the last of the Heretics is defeated. At that point, the true judgement is passed.

In this section, the Heretics are likely to want to burn Infamy to survive. The GM should caution them against doing so, reassuring them that this too is part of their grand destiny.



THE SETTING

The judgement takes place not in the gloomy, mist-shrouded environs of Mire, but in another realm entirely. At the moment of judgement, the Heretics are whisked away to a different setting (one for each different destiny a Heretic chose).

If a Heretic chooses Apotheosis, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

You have declared your ambition to ascend from the realm of mortals and to claim your place in the Realm of Chaos. Your soul and those of your allies upon the Path to Glory must endure the wrath of those you would dare to call peers. You must resist the currents of the Sea of Souls and prove your dominance over beings that have existed always, and shall ever exist until the Warp itself bursts forth drowns all in its glory.

Now, you stand upon a black isle, looking out upon a sea of raging lava, deaths head moons leering down from a night sky unvisited by starlight. Now, you are swallowed in a landscape of heaving flesh, the cloying scent so thick your eyes stream with acid tears. Now, you drown in a mire of decay, a thousand years rot swamping your lungs, being flushed downwards into a freefall through a swirling maelstrom of every colour conceivable to god and mortal.

At the last, all motion ceases and you come to rest at what can only be the Frozen Heart. Your mortal senses strain to impose perceptions on a spectacle that should blast your soul to ashes. Your sanity stretched to the furthest extent, your mind translates what your soul refuses to witness, rendering it into a scene that makes some kind of sense. You look out upon the raging energies of the Screaming Vortex frozen in an instant of time. Invisible beings swell all about, the weight of their unknowable wills threatening to crush you.

Now, you face the judgement of the Ruinous Powers, by proving yourselves in spiritual combat against their champions!

The Heretics must now face combat against a procession of Daemon Princes, drawn from the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook (see pages 358–359) or any other **BLACK CRUSADE** supplement the Game Master has access to, the number determined by reference to the Infamy score of the character being tested, as detailed on page 136.

If a Heretic chooses launching a Black Crusade, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

Those who seek to transcend the boundaries of the Screaming Vortex and make war upon the domains of Mankind must face its greatest champion—the Emperor and his guardians. You have declared your ambition to fight the Long War, and so you must do so, upon the consecrated ground of a Basilica Imperialis!

All about you falls to the ground in a cascade of dust, which as it drains away reveals a new and utterly terrible sight. You stand in the nave of the largest basilica imaginable, its vaulted ceiling so high above it is lost to a haze of incense smoke, the altar over a kilometre before you. This place, though once holy, is now decayed, the blessings of the Plague God edging their way inwards through once-glorious, shattered stained-glass windows and between the very flagstones on which you stand. Yet, it is not beyond the grace of the hated Emperor of Mankind, for even as you wait, a procession of silver-clad figures appears from the direction of the altar, energies dancing upon the blades of their glaives.

You must face the Grey Knights, the champions of the hated Emperor of Mankind and nemeses of those that travel the Path to Glory. You must face them and prove yourself mightier even than they!

The Heretics must now face combat against an entire Brotherhood of phantasmal Grey Knights (see page 365 of the **BLACK CRUSADE**

Core Rulebook), the specific number determined by reference to the Infamy score of the character being tested, as detailed on page 136.



If a Heretic chooses gaining dominion as Lord of the Screaming Vortex, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

You have declared your intent to linger within the anarchic realm of the Screaming Vortex, there to crush every rival to dust so that you and you alone might be recognised as its lord and master. Such an ambition is laudable indeed, but be warned, for many have attempted it before you and many more shall do so yet. The scene about you shifts and distorts, cycling through dozens of different places. The battlefields of the Screaming Vortex, the throne rooms of tyrants, the treasure chambers of pirate lords, unhallowed repositories of forbidden lore... each is a place wherein the fates of worlds are made or unmade, and in each you must face killers sent by those who would see your works burn, and prove yourself worthy of that which you seek.

The Heretics must now face combat against a procession of Tech-Assassins (see pages 362–363 of the **Black Crusade** Core Rulebook), the number determined by reference to the Infamy score of the character being tested, as on page 136.

If a Heretic chooses to pursue an Unknowable Ambition, read or paraphrase the following aloud:

Those that declare their ambitions to achieve desires unknown harbour secret, alien passions within their souls. And so, they must confront enemies that desire the Screaming Vortex for themselves, jealous xenos who would see the glory of the Vortex rendered silent and motionless for their own, unknowable means. The scene twists and distorts in ways entirely at odds with your reality, eventually coming to rest so that you stand at the peak of a vast mountain which itself seems to drift through space. The sky above is alive with the magnificence of the Screaming Vortex, viewed as from beyond the Gloaming Worlds, yet before you have but a moment to take in its glory, alien thoughts crowd in upon your own, and strangers appear at the precipice.

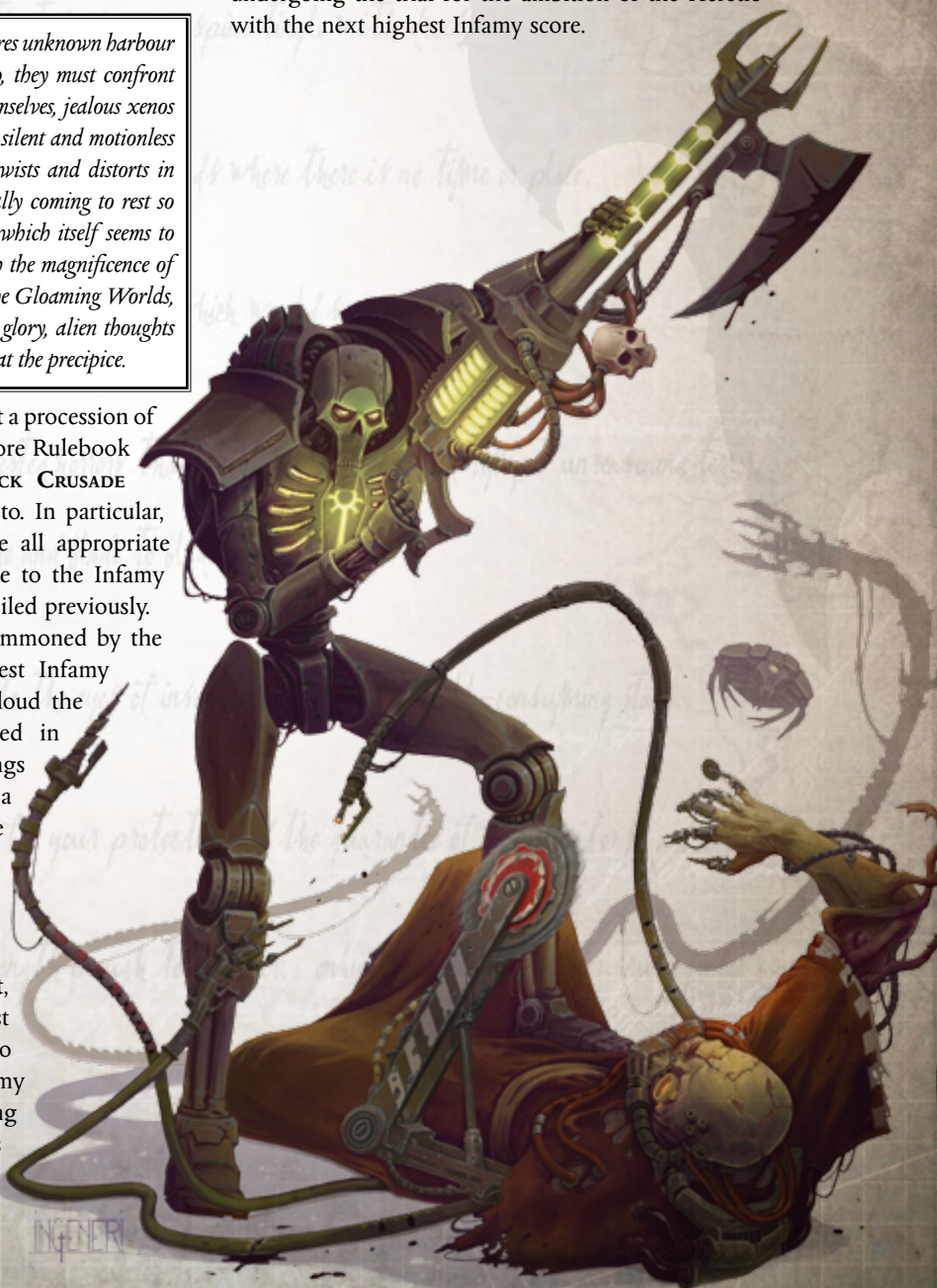
The Heretics must now face combat against a procession of xenos, drawn from the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook (see pages 368–374) or any other **BLACK CRUSADE** supplement the Game Master has access to. In particular, Necrons, Harlequins, and Dark Eldar are all appropriate foes, the number determined by reference to the Infamy score of the character being tested, as detailed previously.

The group now faces the challenge summoned by the ambition of the Heretic with the highest Infamy score. The first time this is done, read aloud the relevant scene setting text. As described in the read aloud, the Heretics' surroundings suddenly shift, snatching them away to a new battlefield where they must face the foe determined earlier. For example, if the highest Infamy score in the group belongs to a Heretic who declared "Black Crusade" as his ambition, then the entire group finds themselves in the ruins of a vast, filth-ridden Basilica Imperialis, and must fight a number of Grey Knights equal to the difference between that Heretic's Infamy score and the threshold set at the beginning of the campaign. The Game Master is free to run the combat however he wishes, for example, having the enemy

attack individually or in waves, engaging from a distance or charging headlong into close combat. The entire group fights, and while the enemy's focus should be on the Heretic whose ambition is being tested, all are part of the trial.

At any point during these confrontations, any Heretic may declare his intent to flee so as to avoid his death. In such an event, they should be reminded that the Priornite Thanator made it perfectly clear that to do so will cause the Ruinous Powers to pass the Heretic over for future blessings. If the GM determines that the character has a good reason for fleeing (such as to fulfil the schemes of Tzeentch in some way by sabotaging the works of Nurgle), he might avoid punishment by Nurgle by drawing another patron's favour. If he does so completely out of cowardice and a short-sighted desire for self-preservation, however, he suffers the consequences described in **The Rewards of Cowardice** on page 141.

In the event of the group defeating the enemy, the moment the last foe hits the ground the battlefield blurs into unreality and after a brief moment of dislocation and the sound of wailing souls, the Heretics find themselves in the next setting, undergoing the trial for the ambition of the Heretic with the next highest Infamy score.



The trials can continue until all of the Heretics are slain. However, in the event that they defeat every enemy sent against them (or so many that the combat has grown tedious), the GM can have the scene change one final time to end the encounter before it drags on too long. In that case, the GM should or paraphrase the following aloud:

At the moment of your victory, the cold void that is the Frozen Heart rises up as the maw of some oceanic leviathan. In an instant, all is black.

This then, is death. Your Path to Glory ends here... Yet, you dwell still within the Realm of Nurgle, whose essence is not simply death, but rebirth. You awaken in the Garden of Nurgle, but all is not as it was before. Rather, the garden itself is alive with riotous motion, which resolves into the form of a Greater Daemon of Nurgle—a Great Unclean One, and its amusement at your presence is writ large upon its hideous features!

Finally, when the Heretics have all been slain (or the GM otherwise ended the encounter), the adventure, and possibly the entire campaign, moves to its pivotal moment.

Should he wish, the Game Master can impose a brief moment of reflection for players to consider the end their Heretics met. If it looks as if they have given up on their characters, the GM can remind the players that Nurgle is the god of death but also of rebirth. In him, hope and despair ever chase each other, each devouring the other's tail in an endless cycle of demise and resurrection. This end is no more final than any other. Game Master should inform the players that the moment of judgement is now upon the Heretics, and that if they have proven themselves worthy of the blessings of the Chaos Gods, their characters can endure even the seemingly inevitable curse called mortality.



IV: THE HEART OF THE VORTEX

PART III: REBIRTH

"So as it ended, it begins. So as it began, it ends. The terminus completes the circle, and as I reach it, I seize eternity!"

—Verg the Interminable, upon his ascension

The climax of the adventure begins with a read aloud section that describes how the Heretics, or their disembodied spirits, at least, pass through the Heart of the Vortex and hear the judgement of the very gods passed upon them. Having done so, they awaken, the Path to Glory having taken them as far through the Screaming Vortex as it may. The Heretics have proved themselves worthy of the blessings of the Ruinous Powers by giving their very lives to prove the scope of their vile ambitions. Read or paraphrase the following aloud:

As the last drop of blood spews forth, time slows unto nothing. All fades to black and your bodies become weightless. A sudden sense of motion grips your souls and you perceive what might be a gust against your skin, but might equally be the raging furnace of eternal damnation. The sensation lingers for an age, ever upon the verge of transcendence and abandon until, an instant later, the blackness erupts into violent colour.

You gain awareness, but in an instant what remains of your sanity is almost blasted to ashes. All about you rages the impossible energies of the Screaming Vortex, but viewed not from afar as on the surface of a world or on the bridge of a starship, but from within. It is as if you are a god, at one with those energies as if they were your own, sovereign domain.

And well they might be, for here is the end, or an end, to your journey along the Path to Glory. Here is the very core of the Vortex, the Frozen Heart, where all is held in perfect balance, if but for an impossible, eternal moment. The raging energies, which you are so used to seeing in violent motion, are perfectly still, orbiting motionlessly about a single, black point of utter nothingness.

The instant your perceptions turn upon that black point, it expands as if to consume your very soul. The black point rushes inwards to engulf you, and you are propelled inexorably towards it. As your soul rushes downwards towards the black nothing, you sense other presences speed past you in the Frozen Heart, mere candle-flickers of consciousness but each unbelievably old, as ancient as the Screaming Vortex itself. Ever onwards, and the invisible space all about you fills with countless numbers of them, each a pinprick of alien memory, anguish, and pain, and then they too are gone, vanishing from your mind.

At the last, you plunge headlong into the black, Frozen Heart of the Screaming Vortex. All turns black once more and you drift for an eternity, a mote upon the gaze of the gods, your soul burning like a comet diving headlong through the heavens for the final time before at last it must plummet to the ground in a baleful conflagration. The sensation of falling lingers for a moment, even after your impact.

And then you awaken, upon the foetid soil of Mire. You have passed through the Frozen Heart of the Screaming Vortex. You are suffused with the raw power of that ultimate abyss, and nothing will ever be the same again...

CROSSROADS IN THE PATH TO GLORY

Should any of the Heretics have earned sufficient Infamy to qualify attempt Apotheosis, the time to do so is now, as they awaken on the surface of Mire. The full rules for achieving Apotheosis can be found on pages 63–73 of this volume. One or more Heretics achieving the ultimate goal of an Aspiring Champion and achieving the higher state of existence that is a Daemon Prince would certainly make one of the most satisfying ends possible to a **BLACK CRUSADE** campaign, although the story need not end there. Should the Heretic fail, he might be transformed into a hideous Chaos Spawn and find himself at the mercy of his erstwhile allies, who might decide to keep it on as a pet or attack beast. Should he succeed, however, and yet retain some measure of care for the affair of mortals, the Imperium itself should tremble at the coming of a new and never-dying enemy. Should the Heretics have slain an excess of enemies during the final judgement, the Game Master should consider granting additional bonuses after the Apotheosis is complete, such as an additional gift or skill to reflect that character's elevated status.

Of course, one or more of the Heretics are very likely to have declared their ambition to launch a Black Crusade into the hated Imperium of Man, in which case, they now have all the blessings and power they need to do so. At the moment of their judgement, the whole Screaming Vortex learned of their new found status and followers are likely to swarm to their banner in their multitudes. Meanwhile, the prophets and seers of Mankind trembled with the sudden notion of a rising storm soon to descend upon their heads. Hidden demagogues amongst the teeming ranks of Mankind will soon learn of the Heretics' rise to power and begin their preparations for their coming. Whether it is the festering Calixis Sector, the wild Koronus Expanse, or the war-torn Jericho Reach that is to be the object of the Heretics' Black Crusade, millions will fall and planets will burn to slake their ambition. The full rules for launching a Black Crusade can be found on page 74, and now is the perfect moment to use them. The Game Master should modify this process in the Heretics' favour to reflect them slaying an excess of foes during the final challenge.



THE REWARDS OF COWARDICE

If any of the Heretics took the option of not fighting to the death during any of the challenges (and did not have some sort of worthy scheme when doing so), he must now confront the awful consequences of attempting to flee back down the Path to Glory he has tread so far. Such craven souls must make a **Hellish (-60) Willpower Test**. Any character who fails immediately gains a number of Corruption Points equal to ten times the number of Degrees of Failure by which they failed the Test and loses the same number of Infamy Points. Any Heretic that passes the 100 Corruption Point threshold is immediately transformed into a Chaos Spawn. Any Heretic whose Infamy falls below 0 is cast out by the Chaos Gods, and word of his failure echoes across not only the Screaming Vortex, but across all the Realms of Chaos. In either case, the Player Character should be retired and a new one created if the campaign is to continue, but if the character manages to avoid either of these dreadful outcomes by passing the Test, he remains in play as normal. Indeed, such a fate might bring about a long and arduous quest for redemption in the eyes of the Ruinous Powers and form an engaging element of any future narrative.

In the case of Heretics deciding that their rise to power amongst the warring masters of the Screaming Vortex is not yet complete and that they wish to exert their will upon their rivals are now able to do so. This is simply a matter of continuing the campaign as before, the adventure limited, for now at least, to the regions within the Screaming Vortex. Having gained the blessings of the Ruinous Powers for their endeavour, the Game Master might consider focusing the action of future adventures on the theme of confronting rival warlords, slaying powerful enemies, gathering followers, and taking over the realms of their foes. Future adventures could focus on using Compacts (as described on page 269 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook) to dedicate such endeavours to the Ruinous Powers whose eyes are already fixed upon the Heretics, the ultimate goal to strike down as many rivals as possible. Should the Heretics have succeeded in defeating an excess of enemies during their judgement, the Game Master should consider granting them a bonus in any future campaign, such as additional Infamy points or advantageous modifiers when interacting with rivals.

Lastly, those Heretics who declared the ambition to gain less definable blessings, treasures, experiences, secret lore, or otherwise abstract rewards should have their desires granted, or at least built into the ongoing narrative of the campaign. In many cases, the Game Master can grant these straight away, as they are unlikely to be any more fundamentally game-changing than achieving Apotheosis or launching a Black Crusade out of the Screaming Vortex. If a player is not yet ready to have his Heretic complete his story yet, then perhaps the Heretic could find some important hint about how to achieve his esoteric goal, or have his subconscious desires fulfilled but still not fully understand their meaning.





THE WAGES OF SIN

*"As it turns out, champion of humanity, wickedness has its rewards.
Tremble, and behold the dread might that my sins have paid to me!"*

—Srur Rustweaver, Sorcerer of Nurgle

As discussed at the beginning of the adventure, **The Heart of the Vortex** is one of four adventures published in this series of **BLACK CRUSADE** supplements, each dedicated to a specific Chaos God. It is likely that players have already completed the first three adventures and in doing so earned the blessings of Tzeentch in the **TOME OF FATE**, Khorne in the **TOME OF BLOOD** and Slaanesh in the **TOME OF EXCESS**. Even if **The Heart of the Vortex** is not intended to form the climax of a campaign, the central themes of death and rebirth are central to the nature of Nurgle, the Plague God, and so it can be played at any time in the campaign should the Game Master wish to do so, albeit perhaps with some modification.

If **The Heart of the Vortex** has been completed as the fourth and final god-specific challenge, and assuming the Game Master has run other adventures between those presented in these four supplements, the achievements gained in previous encounters should be considered if the action is to continue, in particular if the Heretics intend launching a Black Crusade out of the Screaming Vortex.

In **THE TOME OF FATE**, the Heretics fought for the blessings of Tzeentch by embroiling themselves in the affairs of the masters of the planet Q'Sal. They may have come into conflict with one or several of those masters during the adventure presented in that book, in which case the Game Master should consider how this might affect their ongoing efforts. It may be that some or all of the world's most powerful lords are in their debt or under their influence, in which case they may be compelled to add their weight to the Heretics' Black Crusade. They might provide powerful sorcerers, Daemon Engines, hordes of frenzied cultists, or even call in ancient debts and summon up the services of a small contingent of Thousand Sons Chaos Space Marines. The exact details are left up to the Game Master, with reference to the guidance for launching a Black Crusade presented on page 74.

In the second book, **THE TOME OF BLOOD**, the Heretics sought to impose their will upon the warring Drill Clans of Messia, thus proving themselves in the eyes of the Blood God, Khorne. In so doing they might have gained the mighty Daemon Weapon, the Axe of Khak-Aksha, and gained ascendancy over one of more of the clans as well as hordes of mutants. The Game Master should feel free to work these assets into the Black Crusade, and it is likely that countless thousands of mutants and heretics screaming the praises of the Blood God will clamour to their bloody banner if they were successful in that adventure. They might even have gained such a bloody reputation as to attract the attentions of a war band of fearsome World Eaters Chaos Space Marines.

In the third book, **THE TOME OF EXCESS**, the Heretics sought to prove themselves masters of the exquisite depravities of Slaanesh and gain power over the dreaded void pirates of the Ragged Helix. Depending on how well they proved themselves, the Heretics might have access to entire fleets of pirate vessels ready to answer their call to descend upon the worlds of the Imperium and drown them in slaughter and vice. If they can offer sufficient entertainments, they might even be able to lure a war band of the Emperor's Children Chaos Space Marines to aid them in their endeavour.

Lastly, if the Heretics survived their rebirth on Mire under the cold, inscrutable judgement of the Thanator, they have at their disposal a plague that is the culmination of every generation of Priornites that went before.



Daemon Prince Character Sheet

CHARACTER NAME _____	PLAYER NAME _____
DAEMONIC TRUE NAME _____	DARK PATRON _____
PRIDE _____	DISGRACE _____
MOTIVATION _____	DESCRIPTION _____

CHARACTERISTICS

WEAPON SKILL	BALLISTIC SKILL	STRENGTH	TOUGHNESS	AGILITY	INTELLIGENCE	PERCEPTION	WILLPOWER	FELLOWSHIP	INFAMY
(WS)	(BS)	(S)	(T)	(AG)	(INT)	(PER)	(WP)	(FEL)	(INF)



(DAEMON TRAITS)

Daemonic: A Daemon Prince is unnaturally resilient to harm (see page 140 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook), and uses different rules when wielding Psychic Powers.

Dark Sight: A Daemon Prince can see clearly in the dark and thus never suffers penalties for darkness.

Deadly Natural Weapons: A Daemon Prince is always equipped with a weapon with following profile: (Melee; 2d10 I *or* R; Pen 6).

Fear: A Daemon Prince is a terrifying opponent, and enemies who face it are subjected to crushing existential dread (usually Fear [3]—see page 140 of the **BLACK CRUSADE** Core Rulebook).

From Beyond: A Daemon Prince is immune to Fear, Pinning, and Psychic Powers used to cloud, control, or delude its mind.

Size (7): Because of its massive frame, enemies gain a +30 bonus to hit a Daemon Prince and it suffers a -30 penalty to Stealth Tests. Its Base Movement is increased by 3.

The Stuff of Nightmares: A Daemon Prince is immune to the effects of poisons, diseases, asphyxiation, bleeding, Stunning, and most environmental hazards. It ignores all Critical Effect results except those that kill it outright and those inflicted by Psychic Powers, Force weapons, and holy attacks.

Warp Instability: Whenever a Daemon Prince suffers Damage, it must inflict Damage or Insanity Points on another creature before the end of its next Turn. If it fails to do so, it suffers 1d5 Damage (ignoring all protections) and must make a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** or suffer 1 additional Damage per Degree of Failure. If this Damage is in excess of its Wounds, it is banished to the Warp.

SKILLS

	Trained	+10	+20	+30
Acrobatics (Ag)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Athletics (S)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Awareness (Per)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Charm (Fel)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Command (Fel)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Commerce (Int)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Common Lore	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
Deceive (Fel)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dodge (Ag)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Forbidden Lore (Int)	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
Inquiry (Fel)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Intimidate (WP)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Linguistics (Int)	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
Logic (Int)	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Trained	+10	+20	+30
Medicæ (Int)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Navigation (Surface) (Int)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Navigation (Stellar) (Int)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Navigation (Warp) (Int)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Operate (Aeronautica) (Ag)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Operate (Surface) (Ag)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Operate (Voidship) (Int)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parry (WS)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Psynscience (Per)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Scholastic Lore (Int)	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
Scrutiny (Per)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Security (Int)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sleight of Hand (Ag)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stealth (Ag)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tech-Use (Int)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tracking (Int)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Trade (Int)	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐
_____	☐	☐	☐	☐

TALENTS & TRAITS

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CHARACTERISTICS

WEAPON SKILL
(WS)

BALLISTIC SKILL
(BS)

STRENGTH
(S)

TOUGHNESS
(T)

AGILITY
(Ag)

INTELLIGENCE
(INT)

PERCEPTION
(PER)

WILLPOWER
(WP)

FELLOWSHIP
(FEL)

INFAMY
(INF)

WEAPON

NAME			
CLASS	DAMAGE	TYPE	PEN
RANGE	ROF	CLIP	RLD
SPECIAL RULES			

WEAPON

NAME			
CLASS	DAMAGE	TYPE	PEN
RANGE	ROF	CLIP	RLD
SPECIAL RULES			

WEAPON

NAME			
CLASS	DAMAGE	TYPE	PEN
RANGE	ROF	CLIP	RLD
SPECIAL RULES			

MOVEMENT: HALF { } CHARGE { }
FULL { } RUN { }

PSYCHIC POWERS

Psy Rating: { } _____

GIFTS OF THE GODS

ARMOUR

HEAD (1-10)
Type: _____

RIGHT ARM (11-20)
Type: _____

LEFT ARM (21-30)
Type: _____

BODY (31-70)
Type: _____

RIGHT LEG (71-85)
Type: _____

LEFT LEG (86-00)
Type: _____

GEAR

WOUNDS:

CRITICAL DAMAGE: _____

TOTAL
CURRENT
FATIGUE

INFAMY POINTS:

TOTAL { }
CURRENT { }

FAVOUR:

SPENT { }
UNSPENT { }

DAEMONIC GIFTS
