

DARK HERESY™

THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED™



PART II OF THE APOSTASY GAMBIT
ADVENTURE TRILOGY

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ROLEPLAY

DARK HERESY™

THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED™



ROLEPLAYING IN THE GRIM
DARKNESS OF THE 4TH MILLENNIUM

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INTRODUCTION

"Around us is darkness and sin. We slip as one ever further into hell. If one could arrest our slide to damnation, but doing so would cost more lives than you can comprehend, is it not right to take that step. Appalling though the price might be, is it not our duty?"

—Pronouncement of the First Synod of the Maledictor's Hand

THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED is the second part of **THE APOSTASY GAMBIT**, a trilogy of **DARK HERESY** adventures pitting a cell of Acolytes against a conspiracy within the Imperial Church. This conspiracy, the Maledictor's Hand, wants to create religious chaos in the Calixis Sector, in the hope that all the sinners will be burned away in a great and violent upheaval. **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** sees the Acolytes investigating Arch-Cardinal Ignato, the most senior official of the Ecclesiarchy in the entire Calixis Sector. Uncovering Ignato's plan is only the first challenge, however, for after he is dealt with a greater threat is revealed — "Ignato" is actually a different conspirator wearing Ignato's skin, since the real Ignato was secretly replaced by the Maledictor's Hand when his plans became too excessive even for them. With the impostor gone the true Ignato is free to pursue his own heinous plan, a plot so diabolical that it could spell the end of the Calixis Sector.

THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED can be played on its own, as part of your own campaign, or as part of **THE APOSTASY GAMBIT** trilogy. The starting point for the campaign is the knowledge that Arch-Cardinal Ignato is suspected of membership in the Maledictor's Hand, and a number of

options are given for working this into your own campaign. In **THE APOSTASY GAMBIT** campaign, this knowledge is acquired by the Acolytes at the conclusion of the first adventure, **THE BLACK SEPULCHRE**, giving Game Masters the perfect way to dive into **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** without further ado.

GAME MASTER'S BRIEFING

THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED is split between investigative scenes and action scenes. Every type of Acolyte should find something to do, be it interviewing recalcitrant witnesses, spying on the Imperial Clergy, or blasting underhive scum into oblivion. The adventure takes Acolytes from the Cathedral of Illumination to the underhive of Gunmetal City, onto a besieged spaceship deep in the void, and finally to the tomb of Saint Drusus on Stonegarden where a terrible revelation awaits them. The adventure, therefore, provides a chance for the Game Master to show off some of the most dramatic, beautiful, and terrible sights of the Calixis Sector.

The sections of the adventure set in the Cathedral of Illumination are non-linear exploration, with the Acolytes having to follow their own path in seeking evidence against Ignato. Their underhive jaunt is similarly investigative, as they try to track down a key witness, to plans of the Maledictor's Hand, although the dangers of the underhive mean violence is inevitable. Their journey to Stonegarden, meanwhile, is full of action set-pieces, as they fend off an attack by insane devotees of the Imperial Cult, and the showdown on Stonegarden is a high-risk, high-octane mission into certain danger and probable doom.



ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED is broken into three parts:

CHAPTER I: THE SUM OF ALL GLORIES

The Acolytes, using the cover of an investigation into the cathedral's relics, explore the magnificent Cathedral of Illumination for clues about the intentions of Arch-Cardinal Ignato. However they deal with this investigation, the suspicions of fellow clergy and a hidden forgery lab lead them to the identity of Venomskin, an underhive criminal in contact with Ignato for what are surely underhanded purposes.

CHAPTER II: BAD DAY AT BLINDING GULCH

The Acolytes delve into Gunmetal City's underhive in search of Venomskin. There they find themselves caught in a war between rival gangs, and must employ cunning, diplomacy, and a lot of bloodshed to get access to Venomskin's hideout. The Maledictor's Hand has gotten there first, but from the dying Venomskin the Acolytes learn of the Hand's plan to create a religious schism through the creation of false tomes alleged to contain the incendiary lost writings of Saint Drusus himself.

With proof of his wrongdoing, Ignato can be confronted and killed or subdued. The Acolytes return to the Cathedral of Illumination to take Ignato down, but find that the cathedral is besieged by hordes of pilgrims. Ignato, knowing the Acolytes are on to him, has put about the false rumour that the altarpiece

depicting the Emperor has begun weeping blood and speaking words of infinite wisdom. He has done this knowing that the people of Hive Tarsus will try to force their way in to witness this miracle, and that Ignato can use the cover of the chaos to burn down the cathedral and destroy any evidence of his membership in the Maledictor's Hand. The Acolytes must force their way into the cathedral and fight through the Redemptionists trying to burn it down on Ignato's orders before they can face Ignato himself.

At this point the Acolytes reach one of the adventure's major twists. The man they have slain is not Ignato at all, but an impostor—a rogue psyker and fellow member of the Maledictor's Hand—wearing Ignato's skin. The psyker's death sets Ignato free, and he sets off on a quest to fulfil his own ghastly plan. The Acolytes know only that the real Ignato is on Stonegarden, where Saint Drusus was laid to rest in a vast sarcophagus complex.

CHAPTER III: PIETY AFLAME

On their way to Stonegarden, the Acolytes' ship, *The Righteous Indignation*, is attacked by frenzied zealots of the Imperial Creed, used as ignorant shocktroops by the Maledictor's Hand. Only by boarding and destroying their assailants' vessel can the Acolytes save themselves.

The Acolytes arrive at Stonegarden, now transformed into a deathtrap by Ignato's lackeys. At Stonegarden's heart they find a cyst of daemoniac horror and a terrifying truth—Ignato's plan was to resurrect Saint Drusus' corpse through daemoniac possession, so his 'return' would throw the Calixis Sector into religious strife. Now daemons are rampant on Stonegarden, and the Tomb of Saint Drusus is empty...



BACKSTORY

Hundreds of years ago, the Maledictor's Hand was founded as a conspiracy within the Ecclesiarchy, the Church of the Imperium. Its members believed that the Calixis Sector was damned by all its sinners and corruption, and that it had to be put through a terrible upheaval in which the sinners would be exterminated and the Maledictor's Hand could seize control of the sector synod. The Maledictor's Hand recently achieved one of its major goals when Ignato, a founding member, grasped the title of Arch-Cardinal and took up residence at the Cathedral of Illumination on Scintilla.

Ignato, however, was too unstable even for the Maledictor's Hand. His plan to resurrect Saint Drusus through daemonic possession went too far for the conspiracy to stomach. His fellow conspirators kept him imprisoned by means of a psyker, Caecilius Vraine, who stored the dormant Ignato in the Arch-Cardinal's quarters. Vraine, wearing Ignato's skin, continued to perform Ignato's duties.

'Ignato' (actually Vraine) is using his position to create false tomes of Saint Drusus' writings, with the aid of the underhive forger Venomskin. By disseminating these writings, which call for the arrival of the Tyrant Star to be met with a crusade against the sinners of the Calixis Sector, the Maledictor's Hand hopes to create a religious catastrophe.

However, Ignato is still alive, and continues to plot his own way to purge the Calixis Sector of all its sinners. Should Caecilius Vraine die or be taken away from the Cathedral of Illumination, Ignato will be free to pursue his plot with the aid of crazed zealots of the Imperial Creed still loyal to him. He longs for the moment when he will be free, and as the Acolytes approach the Cathedral of Illumination with Vraine in their sights, that time will surely come more quickly than he could dare hope...

REPLACEMENT CHARACTERS

For much of **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED**, the Acolytes are not very far from Inquisitorial authority – while they act autonomously, and without the direct support of their patron Inquisitor, it is not too difficult for new Acolytes to be sent to replace dead, insane, or corrupted compatriots. However, options exist for new characters who can be recruited from the Acolytes' immediate locality, especially in situations where it is unrealistic for a new Acolyte to arrive rapidly.

While at the Cathedral of Illumination, plenty of opportunity exists for replacement Acolytes. Clerics, Adepts, and Sororitas can easily be found among the cathedral's clergy, Arbitrators and Guardsmen watch the queuing pilgrims outside, and a few Scum ply their trades among the pilgrim masses.

The Infernis is seething with Scum, perhaps disaffected members of the Skarit's Dragons or the Cadavers. A hardy missionary might be recruited as a Cleric, rogue Psykers hide from the authorities down among the underhivers, and perhaps the gangs keep an Assassin on the payroll who will join the Acolytes for the right price.

On the journey to Stonegarden, Guardsmen and Tech-Priests can be recruited from among *The Righteous Indignation's* armymen or even the senior staff of the Rogue Trader Zanatov, and just about anyone could be found as a prisoner on board the *Faith Beyond Reason*, eager to join the Acolytes in gratitude and for a chance at payback against the Redemptionists of the Maledictor's Hand.

On Stonegarden, pilgrims from all walks of life might find themselves trapped at the spaceport or inside the tomb complex after Ignato's attack. Clerics and Adepts are particularly common.

THEMES

Certain themes run through **THE APOSTASY GAMBIT** trilogy. They appear in **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** as they did in **THE BLACK SEPULCHRE**, and are mentioned here so that Game Masters can include thematic elements of their own to help foreshadow events and add atmosphere to their Acolytes' adventures.

Secrets: **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** is all about uncovering secrets – first the plan to falsify religious texts, and then the real Ignato's despicable plot. Most characters the Acolytes encounter have secrets of their own, which can be uncovered in the course of the adventure.

Wings: Wings and feathers are a recurring motif in **THE APOSTASY GAMBIT** trilogy. Ignato sprouts psychic wings in his showdown with the Acolytes, the Emperor's wings on an altarpiece disguise the entrance to a hidden level of the cathedral, and the Wings of Flame is the sect used to attack the Acolytes' ship. Wings and feathers are also symbols of the Chaos God Tzeentch, who has most certainly corrupted the Maledictor's Hand.

Books: Books abound in the trilogy, and in this instalment they form a crucial part of the plot as false religious tomes are the basis of the conspiracy's plan.

Moral Corruption: The decay of morals is the root cause of all the threats in **THE APOSTASY GAMBIT**. **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** sees the corruption of the Maledictor's Hand, arrogance and disdain fuelling murder in the cathedral's hospital wing, and religious fervour corrupted into violent insanity.

Ill Advised Alliances: The Maledictor's Hand has thrown its lot in with Chaos, which has rendered them utterly damned. The Acolytes' investigation and the destruction of the Hand are consequences of this dread alliance, as is Ignato's madness and the awful potential of his plan.





THE SUM OF ALL GLORIES

THE SACRISTY
INVESTIGATIONS

•

THE CURIOUS CASE OF
CAIUS MOY

•

THE FORGES OF HERESY

CHAPTER I: THE SUM OF ALL GLORIES

"Praise be that I have seen a glimpse of such holiness! Finally, life holds no more mysteries for me."

—Pilgrim outside the gates of the Cathedral of Illumination

The Acolytes' mission is to enter the Cathedral of Illumination under cover as a group investigating the veracity of the cathedral's relics. Their task while in the cathedral is to investigate Arch-Cardinal Ignato and any suspicious activity amongst his staff, with a view to proving Ignato's membership in the Maledictor's Hand. Even the Inquisition is not hasty in condemning such a high-ranking member of the Imperial Church, and so the Acolytes' patron Inquisitor requires proof before Ignato is confronted directly. The Inquisitor's orders to the Acolytes are available as a handout on page 67.

The Cathedral of Illumination is on the hive world of Scintilla, the Calixis Sector's capital and most populous world (see page 290 of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook). The Cathedral of Illumination is in Hive Tarsus, the second-largest of Scintilla's cities, and is the most important religious site in the whole sector. If **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** is following on from another adventure, such as **THE BLACK SEPULCHRE**, the Acolytes have a chance to recover, re-arm, and so on, before they must enter the cathedral itself, since everything they might need can be found on Scintilla. If the GM wishes to reward the acolytes for previous acts of heroism then the acolyte cell can even be summoned to the Inquisitorial fortress of the Tricorn in Hive Sibellus to receive their orders directly from their patron. If he does meet them face to face their patron Inquisitor leaves soon after on pressing business, assuming his Acolytes are competent enough to fulfil their orders without his help.

After the players have had a moment to read their orders (or received them at the Tricorn Palace in person) they should have an opportunity to prepare themselves, purchasing equipment and possibly even receiving gear from their Inquisitor for which they have the appropriate talents.

NPC PROFILES

Non-Player Character profiles are provided for many of the unique individuals in this adventure. Some of these profiles do not follow the standard character archetypes. NPC's do not need to follow the same rules as Acolytes. In addition, NPC's are not listed with Weapon Training Talents, as it is assumed that an NPC has the required training to use the weapons they are listed with, and any other weapons the GM feels they would know how to use.

ARRIVAL AT THE GATES

The vast sprawl of Hive Tarsus bakes in the desert sun, reflecting the sunlight as if it was ablaze with silver fire. Atop the hive, like a golden crown, sits the Cathedral itself, a vast building encrusted with thousands of statues and gargoyles. The light is almost blinding as your hive-cutter skims over the statue gardens outside its main entrance, and you can see thousands of pilgrims waiting in the merciless sun under parasols and reflector capes for their chance to glimpse the interior. The hive-cutter lands on a pad beside one of the Cathedral's side buildings, connected to the main cathedral by a bridge. Faces turn enviously up to you as you exit the vehicle, then blink away in the sun's glare.

The Acolytes are met by Archivist Drook, a pudgy, tonsured man in a monastic habit who holds a silvered parasol to keep the worst of the sun off.

"Ah! You are the Inspectors of Relics, I take it? I am Archivist Drook, keeper of our Sacristy. I had been informed of your arrival. I can assure you that you will find nothing wrong with our collection! No, not at all, not at all! Our holy objects have been assembled with the utmost care and date back even beyond the Angevin Crusade! Come, come, let us get out of this infernal sun. I have ordered quarters made available for you in the Cloisters Temporal. And here are your datakeys – these will give you free access to the Sacristy. Now, the Arch-Cardinal shall deliver his sermon soon. There is nothing quite as fine for spiritual health than the uplifting words of such a man!"

Drook eventually leads the Acolytes into the cathedral. The Acolytes now have a few moments to ask Drook questions as they pass through the catacombs and hallways of the Cathedral of Illumination. Drook is on the level, he firmly believes that every artefact in the Sacristy is a genuine article of faith. He has spent the better part of his life painstakingly researching each one. As they walk he will gladly discuss the artefacts with the players, which can lead to a few clues the Acolytes may wish to follow up on such as:

- Drook spends very little time in the Hospital, as he is sure that a noble (whose name he cannot remember) is possessed. He has asked his superiors to look into the matter but as of yet nothing has been done. He recommends that the Acolytes stay away from such a dangerous place as well.
- He brags on the completeness of the Archive. He admits that much of his research takes place there, and that it is a small joke amongst his peers that the servitors there are his closest friends. If asked, he can convince the servitors there to allow the Acolytes to remove books from the library for study, or use within the Sacristy.
- Drook also advises the Acolytes to take time out during their visit to pray or meditate within the Garden of Repose. He often spends time reading religious texts there and finds that no place within the Cathedral is as conducive to contemplation.

Drook is a focused man, and has little other information, although he may know more (or have heard important rumours) at the GM's discretion.

Once the Acolytes have had a chance to ask Drook a few questions (or simply hear what he has to say) the group will emerge on a balcony which runs all the way around the cavernous main nave, giving them a spectacular view of this place of worship, just as Arch-Cardinal Ignato begins a sermon to the gathered faithful.

Everywhere, there is light. The fires of Scintilla's sun have been diverted into rivers of flame that run around the columns of the nave, as if the congregation gathered on the hundreds of pews were suspended on a silver platform above a sea of fire. The pillars reaching up to the vaulted ceiling seem rooted in light, a silver glare running up their whole lengths to illuminate the winged servitor-cherubs that flit between them carrying censers of smouldering incense. The river of flame separates the congregation from the altar, beside which is the preacher's pulpit in which Arch-Cardinal Ignato stands, resplendent in white and purple, ready to begin. The altar itself is overlooked by a vast altarpiece depicting a winged Emperor treading grotesque daemons beneath his feet, his golden armour and silver wings reflecting a blade of light almost too bright for the naked eye. At the far end of the cathedral, past the seating for the hundreds-strong choir and side chapels for the senior clergy, a ceiling-high stained glass window blazes in a thousand different colours depicting moments from the history of the Calixis Sector. Ignato opens the tome on the lectern in front of him, blesses the congregation with the sign of the Aquila, and begins his sermon.

Ignato's sermon is a bombastic and impassioned diatribe on the importance of the status of the Imperial Church. He emphasises that the church and its clergy must be exalted above the common man and woman, and that the glorification of the church must happen, if needs be, at the expense of the average citizen. He justifies this by saying that it is the average citizen who most needs guidance of the church, as prone as he is to sin and moral weakness. The sermon is very popular among the thousands-strong audience, which mostly consists of wealthy spire-dwellers from Hive Tarsus and Hive Sibellus. Ignato receives a rapturous round of applause as he thanks the congregation for their presence and leaves the pulpit, allowing the choir to begin a cycle of devotional hymns.

Drook chokes back tears of joy as he shows the Acolytes to their rooms. Drook apologizes for the accommodations, giving each Acolyte a key to the grouping of rooms. A centre chamber area with a large table provides a place for the Acolytes to gather and plan, as well as take their meals. From this chamber are enough rooms for each character to have their own quarters. Comfortable to excess, these rooms are possibly the nicest place any of the characters have ever stayed, including Acolytes with a Noble background.

Meals can be ordered by the Acolytes through the network of Servo-Skulls and Cherubim that flutter about on errands and tasks. The accommodations and nourishment are of such high quality that any character who requires healing heals an additional wound per day if Lightly wounded or an additional wound per week if Heavily wounded.

Acolytes may wish to secure the area against listening devices or to search for spies. The rooms have hundreds of hiding places, but a thorough search reveals nothing, as there are none present.

THE CATHEDRAL OF ILLUMINATION

The Acolytes have access to all the areas of the cathedral, save for the hidden Forging Wing (which no one other than Ignato knows about) and the Arch-Cardinal's Quarters (Ignato's private domain). The important areas are the Nave (the main cathedral hall where Ignato delivered his sermon), a Hospital (run by Sisters Hospitaller and lay medicae for the sector's wealthy), the Cloisters Temporal (where the staff quarters and Skullariums can be found), the Sacristy (containing the many relics housed at the cathedral), the Arch-Cardinal's Quarters (inhabited by Ignato himself), the Penitent's Cells (where the cathedral's complement of Adepta Sororitas stay), the Synod Hall (where meetings of the Calixis Sector's senior clergy are held), the Archive (a repository of religious learning in thousands of books), the Garden of Repose (a quiet memorial to the sector's most venerated dead) and the Catachumen's Cloister (currently the domain of the fearsome Exorcist Amortus).

The Acolytes' aim at the cathedral, although they do not know it initially, is to find the hidden Forging Wing, where they can find evidence of 'Ignato's' creation of false religious texts and information leading them to the underhive forger Venomskin and the next section of the adventure.

A subplot at the cathedral involves a series of disappearances among the Hospital's patients, which the Acolytes can trace to a medicae working at the hospital. Solving this mystery is not essential to the adventure but can help the Acolytes make allies who can come in useful later, as well as being the right thing to do (and perhaps a way to earn a Fate Point). Clues about Ignato, the Maledictor's Hand, and the Arch-Cardinal's sinister plan can also be found at the cathedral, helping the Acolytes piece together the nature of the threat they face and foreshadowing the adventure's later events.

"ARCH-CARDINAL IGNATO" (CAECILIUS VRAINE)

The man posing as Arch-Cardinal Ignato is Caecilius Vraine, a member of the Maledictor's Hand, sent to replace the real Ignato who was judged too unstable even for the Hand's purposes. Vraine is a powerful rogue psyker who, while he is driven by an obsession with bringing about religious catastrophe, is a calculating and patient man. He has cultivated the character of "Ignato" to be curt, elitist, and a man who does not suffer fools, and is quick to opine on his favourite subject, the importance of maintaining the authority of the Imperial Church. The true Vraine is a psychopath who considers the deaths of billions to be an acceptable price to pay to see sin burned out of the Calixis Sector. Vraine hopes to be among the leaders of the Calixis Sector when the Hand's religious apocalypse comes about, but for now his focus is squarely on his own plan to create spiritual catastrophe.

THE CATHEDRAL OF ILLUMINATION



- 1 NAVE
- 2 HOSPITAL
- 3 CLOISTERS
- TEMPORAL
- 4 ARCH-
CARDINAL'S
QUARTERS
- 5 SACRISTY
- 6 PENITENT'S CELL
- 7 SYNOD HALL
- 8 ARCHIVE
- 9 GARDEN OF
REPOSE
- 10 CATACHUMEN'S
CLOISTER

AREA 1: THE NAVE

Without its thousands of worshippers and the soaring voices of the choir, the cathedral's nave is magnificent in a different way. Footsteps echo on the marble floor and the flames bathe the whole place in light as if the Emperor's own gaze fell upon it. Heady incense drifts down from the censer-servitors flitting around the upper reaches of the vaulted ceiling. It is difficult not to be awed by the scale of the nave and the huge golden altarpiece with its depiction of the Emperor. It is no wonder why many pilgrims from across the Calixis Sector will wait for weeks to get a glimpse of it's magnificence.

The Nave is the heart of worship in the Calixis Sector, and even jaded Acolytes will be affected by the majesty of the place. Acolytes who wish to pray, contemplate on religious matters, or give confession will have few opportunities in their life to do so in a more suitable setting. A place this holy is anathema to the corrupt and daemonic. Characters with 20 or more Corruption points find themselves feeling ill or in constant pain. These characters treat their Toughness as half its normal rating while in the Nave. In addition they are at a -20 to all Intelligence or Fellowship Tests taken while they remain within the Nave.

On the lectern beside the altar is a copy of *Words of the Saints Selected For the Noble of Mind*, a huge and comprehensive book of prayers attributed to Calixian Saints. It is a standard text for sermons among the clergy, and has been heavily annotated. A Routine (+20) Common Lore (Imperial Creed) Test shows that Ignato favours sermons that instruct the common people to be obedient and unquestioning, and that stress the importance of religious authority over the temporal. If the Test is passed by two or more Degrees of Success then the character finds several passages that have been noted as appropriate for feasting days, where the common peoples are more likely to be in attendance. These sermons focus on the sacrifices one must make in service of the Ecclesiarchy and that even death, which is the most a servant of the God-Emperor can give of himself, is still a small but necessary sacrifice.

The choir area, behind the main Nave altar, has room for a hundreds-strong choir as well as an enormous church organ that, anywhere other than the Cathedral of Illumination, would dominate the place. Given the scale of the Nave, however, it looks positively ordinary. Choirmistress Sprange does not appreciate anyone other than herself playing the organ, especially not strangers from outside the Cathedral.

The Nave is normally minimally staffed unless a sermon is imminent. Lector Xavieticus sometimes holds private services in the side chapel or hears confessions here. The cathedral's choir practices here twice a week, under Choirmistress Sprange who spends the two hours of practice time berating the men and women of the choir in spite of the fact that they are drawn from all over Scintilla and have unfailingly exquisite voices. Game Masters who want to make the Nave a little more interesting on repeat visits can have the Acolytes explore the Nave while a private service or choir practice is going on.

The entrance to the Forging Wing is in the altarpiece. The entrance requires either a key or a code. An Ordinary (+10)

Search Test will reveal that one of the many daemons depicted being trodden beneath the Emperor's feet is lacking an eye, leaving a deep socket (if the Acolytes know they are looking for a keyhole in the altarpiece the Game Master can forgo this Test, since they need to find it eventually). This socket is the keyhole, and the Righteous Femur of Saint Brannicus the Thrice-Maimed, a relic in the Sacristy, is the key. When this key is inserted, one of the Emperor's wings then hinges down, revealing the entrance to a descending shaft. Any Acolytes entering the shaft must clamber some of the way up the statue, which is awkward but does not require a Test.

Alternatively, the false Ignato installed a secondary system. On the lectern, the copy of *Words of the Saints Selected for the Noble Mind* can be lifted up, revealing a blank screen beneath. This requires a Difficult (-10) Search Test to find, unless the Acolytes are looking for a location in which to input a code. This screen can be written on with a finger or an implement such as a quill. Drawing three symbols—the Open Hand, the Crescent Moon, and the Shattered Skull—will complete the opening sequence.



AREA 2: THE HOSPITAL

The smell of disinfectant mixes with incense in this set of long corridors lined with rooms. Each room has a door with a window, through which can be seen the patients who are treated here. Some are comatose, others writhe and moan in pain in the grip of feverish dreams. Medicae orderlies push carts of medicines here and there and a matronly Sororitas does her rounds, checking on all the patients and taking notes on their conditions. The corridors all meet at a central common area, where patients sit reading, playing regicide, or just staring into space.

The Hospital treats the members of wealthy Scintillan families in return for donations to cathedral coffers. Many families use the cathedral's Hospital to effectively dispose of unwanted family members, particularly those who are mentally wayward, knowing that they will be well cared for here even if they are forgotten by their own families. The Hospital is the domain of Hospitaller Superior Brennhilde, who oversees a cadre-medicae of ten orderlies and five novice Sororitas in training to become full Sisters Hospitallers themselves. Working alongside her is Senior Medicae Gallican. While Brennhilde sees to the spiritual wellbeing of the patients, Gallican oversees their physical treatments.

Along with the ward corridors and common areas, the Hospital has a storage area for medicines and equipment, a surgical theatre where Gallican performs operations, offices for Brennhilde and Gallican, and a side chapel for patients' use. Gallican's office is dominated by a tall bookshelf with hundreds of medical dataslates, including a multi-volume edition of *Several Matters of Physical Abnormality and The Manner of Their Banishment*. Numerous pages have been torn out of volume six of this edition (Acolytes discover this only if they examine the volumes, which they might do in light of evidence from the Catacombs). Brennhilde's office is bare except for a shelf of prayer books, a small shrine to the Emperor's Mercy, a desk with writing parchments, and a large wall-mounted tapestry depicting a carefully dissected body. Three patients here are important to the Acolytes' investigation. K'Taarn is a mad noble whose mind, while addled with conspiracy

theories, can prove useful in guiding the Acolytes where they need to be. Acina von Duchenhof is terrified of the local cadre-medicae and maintains a false comatose state. She has seen something that can aid the Acolytes in their investigation. Thirdly, Caius Moy sleeps fitfully, occasionally talking in his sleep in riddles and vague hints.

MEDICAE GALLICAN

Phorsus Gallican is a man fully aware of the fact that people rely on him to stay alive. He is arrogant and high-handed, and treats his patients as if their failure to be healthy is a form of moral lapse. He discusses his patients as if they weren't there, coldly describing grim prognoses and scathing accounts of the laziness he believes is at the root of most so-called medical conditions. In spite of his lack of bedside manner he is an extremely competent medicae, with an encyclopaedic knowledge of anatomy and common maladies. He is particularly prone to pointing out the likely behavioural conditions suffered by those he has conversations with, which means few people in the Hospital Wing have a conversation with him if they can help it.

LECTOR XAVIETICUS

A lifelong servant of the Imperial Church, Xavieticus is pious and obedient to the authority of the Creed. However, his recent suspicions about Arch-Cardinal Ignato have thrown him into a crisis of religious doubt. Alone and afraid for his faith, he is eager to seek the help of the Acolytes, for they give him someone to confide in as much as anything. Xavieticus is learned and scholarly, but he lacks the worldly-wisdom that would help him negotiate the minefield of suspicion and allegiances around him. Xavieticus is only truly comfortable when studying religious texts, and he tends to sprinkle his speech with quotes from scriptures no one else has read.

K'TAARN'S MAD RANTINGS

K'Taarn believes a wide variety of psychic echoes and monsters are preying on the cathedral. His rantings can serve as false leads for Acolytes to follow:

- Among the sculptures on the cathedral roof are statues of daemons, placed there during the cathedral's construction. They are actually real daemons in disguise, and at night they come down to prey on the staff and the pilgrims gathered outside.
- The echo of Saint Drusus wanders the cathedral, dispensing words of crucial wisdom, but the cardinals are covering it up.
- Patients have gone missing from the hospital. The staff say they ran away or were reclaimed by their families, but everyone knows that's a lie!
- The staff in the Cloisters Temporal cook meals using the remains of waifs and strays captured from the streets of Hive Tarsus, and hold degenerate orgies in the name of the Dark Gods!
- There is a hidden passage underneath the cathedral organ in the Nave, which leads to a secret underground dungeon.
- The Catacombs are full of mutants and every full moon, at midnight, they emerge through a secret door in the main Nave and hunt for victims from among the cathedral's congregations.
- A young woman was murdered by a Cardinal centuries ago and her psychic spirit still wanders, weeping and crying for justice. She alone knows the name of the perpetrator, whose descendants are just as corrupt as he was and now reign as senior clergy.

MOLKUS K'TAARN

Molkus K'Taarn is a scion of House K'Taarn who was plagued by nightmares and visions and was sent to the Hospital to prevent him from causing any embarrassment to his family. K'Taarn can usually be found in the common area reading or playing regicide against himself, and is eager to engage passers-by in conversation. He believes the cathedral is haunted by all manner of echoes and daemons, and that the cause of this is the cathedral's location over a wellspring of daemoniac energy boiling directly up from the Warp. K'Taarn's theories are all wrong and not a little insane but his rantings can direct the Acolytes to important clues that, coincidentally, hint at what is really going on in the cathedral. The Acolytes might well conclude that K'Taarn is telling the truth, in which case the patient is a good source of red herrings as well as genuine clues.

If an Acolyte engages K'Taarn in conversation, he turns talk towards the cathedral's archives.

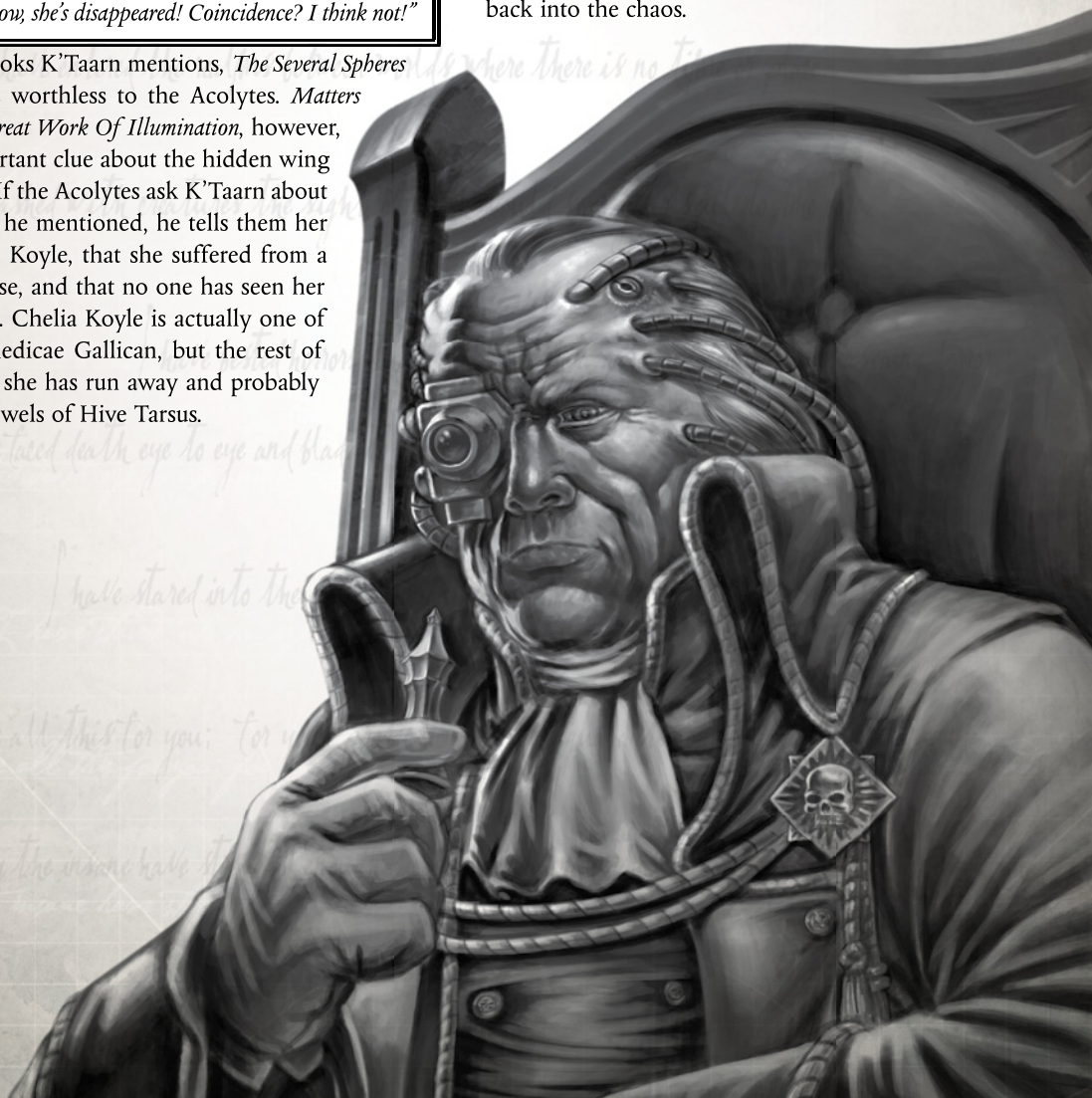
"Listen, it's all written down, I tell you! They keep all the dataslates right here, in the archive! Sometimes they let me borrow slates from there, but there are plenty they don't want me to read! Find The Several Spheres of Eternal Faith, and Matters Concerning the Great Work of Illumination! One of the other patients here, who used to work in the archives, she told me about those two. And now, she's disappeared! Coincidence? I think not!"

Of the two books K'Taarn mentions, *The Several Spheres of Eternal Faith* is worthless to the Acolytes. *Matters Concerning The Great Work Of Illumination*, however, contains an important clue about the hidden wing of the cathedral. If the Acolytes ask K'Taarn about the other patient he mentioned, he tells them her name was Chelia Koyle, that she suffered from a severe lung disease, and that no one has seen her for several weeks. Chelia Koyle is actually one of the victims of Medicae Gallican, but the rest of the staff believes she has run away and probably got lost in the bowels of Hive Tarsus.

CAIUS MOY

The third important patient is Caius Moy. Caius lies fitfully sleeping in Room 7. While walking through the ward corridors, a Challenging (+0) Awareness Test causes an Acolyte to catch Moy talking in his sleep. He repeats "The Winged One... the Winged One is here..." to himself quietly, yet filled with abject terror.

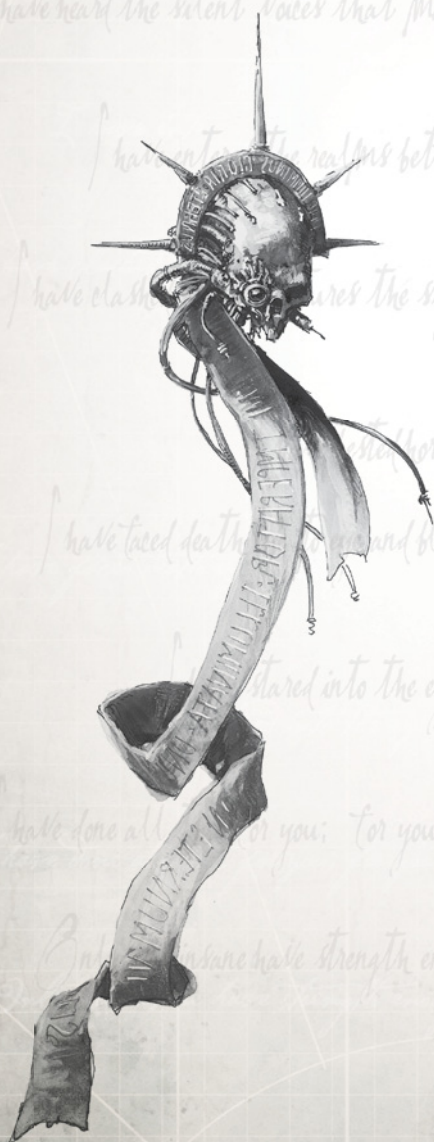
Moy is actually possessed by a daemon, though this condition is incredibly recent, the daemon taking hold of his mind within the last few hours. He is kept in restraints, for the staff fear the severity of his pre-possession afflictions might cause him to harm himself. Caius Moy is an old friend of Lector Xavieticus, who requires the Acolytes to assist in Moy's exorcism before they can gain his trust. A Challenging (+0) Medicae Test ascertains that Moy's symptoms are unusual, including severe body temperature fluctuations, rapid changes in pupil dilation, and random palsies and paralysis that suggest no regular physiological cause. A Difficult (-10) Psyniscience Test notes a powerful psychic presence concealing itself in Moy's mind. Use of Mind Scan or other mind-reading powers reveal only a terrible, chaotic maelstrom without form, where Moy's mind is imprisoned adrift in a sea of alien thoughts. From the maelstrom surfaces a shadowy figure with vast dark wings who turns baleful eyes on the psyker, then dives back into the chaos.



AREA 3: CLOISTERS TEMPORAL

This area beneath the main floor of the nave is a busy, smoky network of old cellars and vaults given over to the mundane working of the cathedral. Cooks stir cauldrons of broth to be handed out to the poor or prepare exquisite meals for the senior clergy, vestments and chorister's robes are cleaned in vats of boiling water, books are repaired, chalices are polished and all manner of menial tasks are carried out. Servitors lie dormant in dormitories, waiting for their next shift cleaning the vast cathedral or waiting on the clergy.

The Cloisters Temporal are, in some ways, the heart of the cathedral. The staff all live here save the senior clergy and the Sororitas, including choristers, cleaners, and cooks. This is where the Acolytes are given their own dormitory by Archivist Drook. Other members of the staff can often be found here including Drook, Lector Xavieticus, and Medicae Gallican.



Lector Xavieticus' cell is decorated with dozens of religious images and icons, and has a bookcase crammed with all manner of inspirational texts and commentaries on proper Low Gothic composition. Xavieticus often prays here at an icon of Saint Drusus, the kind of trinket bought from the pedlars who ply the crowds outside the cathedral. When not sleeping or in prayer he works at a battered old writing desk annotating readings or composing sermons.

Xavieticus attracts the Acolytes' attention as quickly as he can. Xavieticus has intercepted some suspicious vox traffic to "Ignato," and believes the Arch-Cardinal may be up to no good. He does not have the confidence to investigate himself and does not want to trust any other clergy with the information, but he is willing to work with outsiders and wants to find out if the Acolytes (who he assumes from the start are indeed Inspectors of Relics) can be trusted with his suspicions. Xavieticus' information is crucial to the investigation and the Acolytes must gain his trust if they are to proceed.

"I am glad you could come. Though I know this goes well beyond your jurisdiction, I suspect... nay, I fear... that Ignato is following an agenda of which none of us are aware. You must understand, I cannot simply share my suspicions with anyone. I must be satisfied that you will not turn on me. I have a friend who is in need. Grave need. My friend, Caius Moy, resides in the Hospital. He is in the grip of a fearsome daemonic possession, of this I am certain, though it has gone undetected by the staff and I doubt they would allow him to live. He must be exorcised. Exorcist Amortus owes me a favour or two, but he cannot do it alone. I knew Moy at the Schola Progenium, when we were just boys, and he is a most dear friend. If his mind is to survive his ordeal intact then you must help Amortus drive the daemon from his mind. I cannot say this will not be without risks, but if you do this for me then I can bring you in on what I know."

Xavieticus, once satisfied that the Acolytes are on his side, can show them the communications he has intercepted. They take the form of letters on parchment, each fastened with a wax seal with the image of an open hand. The most important one, from the point of view of the Acolytes, is one that contains a symbolic code – the Open Hand, the Crescent Moon, and the Shattered Skull. Xavieticus is willing to help the Acolytes with low risk investigations, like checking out the Sacristy or the Archives. He is, however, reluctant to accompany the Acolytes on more adventurous tasks, such as journeying into the Forging Wing or into the Underhive, since he wants to stay and look after Moy who, even after the Acolytes exorcise him, is still sickly and weak.

Medicae Gallican's quarters are as comfortable as he can make them, with a well-stocked drinks cabinet, art on the walls, deep carpeting, and an aquarium of fish from Scintilla's seas. The effect is claustrophobic, since his cell is not large enough for such luxuries, but Gallican values keeping up appearances. Gallican relaxes here, drinking himself to sleep most nights. He despises the rest of the cathedral staff and does not associate with them, preferring his own company or that of his comatose patients. Acolytes who confront Gallican might well do so here, and could discover that he is paranoid enough to keep a well-oiled hand cannon beneath a pillow.

AREA 4: ARCH-CARDINAL'S QUARTERS

A grand doorway of beaten metal barred with a length of inscribed steel stands in your way. Suits of archaic armour flank the doorway as if guarding it, and a pict-stealer mounted above the archway blinks as it watches for intruders.

The Arch-Cardinal's Quarters are off-limits to anyone save Arch-Cardinal Ignato himself, and that includes the Acolytes. Only with the death or capture of "Ignato" does this room become easily accessible. Acolytes may well wish to gain entry, however, which is understandable since Ignato is the man they are here to investigate. Getting in before "Ignato" is defeated, however, is very difficult.

The door incorporates an ancient device. An Ordinary (+10) Search Test reveals an auspex array attached to a pict-stealer. The door lock was crafted by the sector's greatest artisans, and requires a Very Hard (-30) Security Test to unlock it. Any motion near the door automatically activates the pict-stealer which catalogues all activity.

The Arch-Cardinal's chambers are resplendent to the point of oppression. Vastly expensive antique furniture competes for attention with heroic portraits of Imperial saints and long-dead clergymen on the walls. A massive crystal chandelier bathes everything in simulated candlelight, gleaming on the gilt and ivory everywhere. This first chamber is for receiving guests judging by the huge decanter of amasec and glasses on a round exotic wood table. Leading off are a bedchamber, a private chapel, and a study.

Ignato's quarters are full of items valuable for both their intrinsic worth and the information they can provide. The bedchamber contains an enormous four-post bed, a wealth of side cabinets and several wardrobes. Most of the wardrobes contain lavish vestments for every ceremony and occasion but one holds a complex piece of equipment - composed of dozens of valves, pipes and needles, it takes up one whole wardrobe.

A Routine (+20) Tech-Use or Medicae Test or a Challenging (+0) Common Lore (Tech) Test identifies this as a complex, possibly archeotech medical device, used for injecting a concoction of rejuvenating drugs into the patient's skin. It appears to the Acolytes that this machine has been used frequently and recently. In fact, it is used by Caecilius Vraine to maintain the skin of Cardinal Ignato, which he wears to disguise himself as the Arch-Cardinal.

The dining area has a long hardwood dining table watched over by a stern granite statue, slightly larger than life-sized, of a stern-faced holy warrior in plate armour carrying a shield and spear.

The statue hides the cathedral's most gruesome secret. It is actually a device used to contain a prisoner – the skinless body of the real Arch-Cardinal Ignato, kept in a state of induced coma and granting Vraine psychic access to Ignato's memories. The mechanism keeping the statue closed and Ignato comatose is psychically controlled by Vraine, and if Vraine dies the device deactivates, Ignato wakes, and the statue opens.

The statue is a very cunning disguise for the containment device. A Difficult (-10) Search Test identifies almost imperceptible seams in the stone, showing the statue is not a single piece of granite as it appears. Breaking the statue by hand requires a Very Hard (-30) Strength Test. Otherwise, it must be dismantled by a tool like a las-cutter. Opening up the statue reveals a horrific sight—a man without his skin, revealing the glistening red of his muscles and his lidless eyes. This is the real Ignato. If found in this way he is in a coma, with extremely shallow breathing and slow heartbeat, and without a Challenging (+0) Medicae Test he appears dead. If the Test is passed, the Acolyte realises this body is alive, but removing it from the machine without proper procedures would kill the occupant. It is nearly impossible to recognise this man as the true Ignato without his skin.

After Caecilius Vraine is killed, the statue shatters and Ignato is released. If the Acolytes come to the chambers after this they find the statue in ruins, displaying the complex remnants of the medical equipment which kept Ignato dormant.

The study is where Vraine writes correspondence to other clerics and drafts religious pronouncements and sermons. Vraine also deals with communications from the rest of the Maledictor's Hand. Some of this correspondence has been intercepted by Lector Xavieticus, while some of it is in the study. Vraine has been lax in maintaining secure communications, partly because he feels he is safe in his private quarters and partly because, as his plan to create false religious texts approaches completion, he deals with more and more messages to and from the other members of the Maledictor's Hand. An Acolyte who takes the time to go through the hundreds of papers in the drawers of the granite gilt-inlaid writing desk discovers, among endless mundane letters about cathedral business, three letters from members of the Maledictor's Hand. One, from another Hand member who has infiltrated the Ecclesiarchy, is a warning about the "prisoner" and the folly of keeping him alive. Another, from the forger Venomskin, illustrates a little more about Vraine's own plan. The last is a letter written by Ignato himself when he was trying to rally Hand members to his side. These three letters can be found as handouts on page 68.



AREA 5: SACRISTY

This grand, mostly dim room resembles a museum. The air is artificially cool and dry. Spoglobes on the ceiling pick out the display cases of relics. Five Sisters of Battle stand silent watch over the room, each near a display. Their Godwyn De'az pattern bolters and black armour visible just outside the well of light cast by the spoglobes.

The relics, three or four per cabinet, encompass a wide variety of holy objects, from bones and broken pottery to elaborate robes, croziuses, and even weapons. Servitors, for handling or cleaning the relics themselves, stand dormant beside the door of a set of offices at the back of the room. A waist-high cleaning servitor trundles an endless path to dust the cases and clean the floor, while the hum of the atmospheric cleansers are ever-present.

The Sacristy is a world away from the Nave, which serves as the public face of worship in the Calixis Sector. It is quiet and cool, inviting contemplation. The Acolytes have free access to the Sacristy even though the waiting list to view the relics can be years long, and the datakeys they were given by Drook get them through the solid security doors without trouble. Archivist Drook prefers to accompany the Acolytes if they go here, intending to quietly observe the work he assumes they are here to do, and make sure they do nothing to damage or dishonour the relics. Drook does not follow the Acolytes around, however, so it is not difficult to visit this place without him.

The most important relic here, one that the Acolytes need to obtain to continue, is the Righteous Femur of Saint Brannicus the Thrice-Maimed. Drook keeps records of the Sacristy's business in the office and asking him about them, or studying them directly, shows that of all the relics here the Righteous Femur is the only one to have been taken from the sacristy by Arch-Cardinal Ignato himself. He has done so several times over the last four months, each time supposedly for study. When asked about the femur, Drook admits that the femur is the one relic whose authenticity he has begun to doubt.

"Now, this goes no further, but I am no longer certain about the truth of the Righteous Femur's status as a true relic. I know, I know, shocking indeed! And yet I have noted that, while Saint Brannicus is said to have beaten three hundred sinners to death with his severed leg which remained miraculously intact, the femur has several tiny tool marks. Surely this could not be possible with the Emperor's own will keeping the bone inviolate? Added to that, the Arch-Cardinal has himself spent many nights studying the Righteous Femur. I think that he must doubt the femur's authenticity too, or why would he take such an interest in it? I confess to being most perturbed by this. Most perturbed indeed! I suspect also that you yourselves are here to inspect the Righteous Femur. It is a scandal, a scandal I tell you, to have a false relic confirmed on my watch! I only hope the shame of this goes no further than us and the Arch-Cardinal..."

THE WORDS OF ST. DRUSUS

Game Masters may wish to use the prophecy as a hook for other stories, or to foreshadow events in the final instalment of **THE APOSTASY GAMBIT** trilogy. At the end of this adventure the body of St. Drusus is reanimated by the entity known as the Dei-Phage. To allude to these coming events, the Acolytes may find the following words of St. Drusus accompanying the Genesis Vestments buried within the vid record:

These shoulders have carried the word of the God-Emperor to fill the chalice.

These arms have held back the tides of the enemy as they assail us without respite.

These hands have shaped the future of the stars and forged our victory in His name.

Service ends only in death. In death I can serve.

In death I can lead. I turn my back to the God-Eater.

I turn away from him and to the light so that my service to He Who Is On Earth does not end.

I turn from the promises of the tainted.

Drook would rather the Acolytes study the Righteous Femur in the Sacristy, but he is willing to let them take it away for study providing they promise it does not leave the cathedral. In truth, "Ignato" has been using the femur as the key to the Forging Wing, and the tool marks are from its use in the keyhole mechanism (the femur is indeed a fake).

The Battle Sisters do not speak unless spoken too. They can also give Acolytes rudimentary information (such as the name) about the objects in the cases. If the Acolytes attempt to interact with them for more than a moment they will politely say, "The God-Emperor commands that I return to my duty," before falling silent to watch over the room.

RELICS

The relics can also be shown to the Acolytes by Archivist Drook, although he thinks the Acolytes should know of them anyway and views their recognition of these artefacts as a sort of test to help demonstrate their suitability as Inspectors of Authenticity. A Challenging (+0) Charm Test, however, will get around his reluctance, and he will show them the relics, describing the history of each.

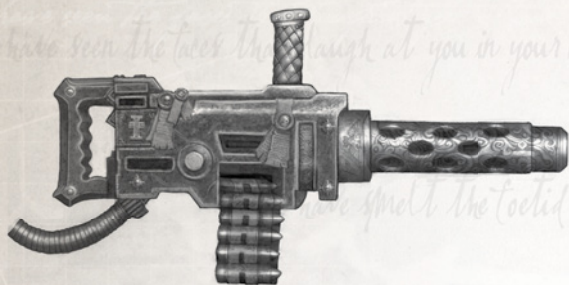
Stealing the relics is virtually impossible, since the Sacristy is a secure location guarded by the Adepta Sororitas. While the Acolytes have more access to the Sacristy than most, they are still watched constantly by the Battle Sisters in attendance. Acolytes should know that being caught attempting to remove these relics will certainly end in their execution or worse.

Each relic requires a separate Test to determine its authenticity. There are several here, and acolytes should have a moment to investigate the room, ask the Sisters or Drook questions, and as they proceed the Game Master can call for Tests when each item is encountered. If a Test is failed the Acolyte is unable to verify the authenticity of the artefact, and is left not knowing whether the object is false or not.

The Rotator Cannon of Warrior-Saint Praxides

This Sanctified Heavy Stubber fills an entire case on its own along with a bandolier of twice blessed rounds made from the cobblestones touched by the boots of St. Drusus as he marched through the Exsanguinated Pass. It has been impeccably maintained by servitors and still functions as a Best Craftsmanship Heavy Stubber whose rounds grant the Sanctified Quality.

This is a true relic. Any acolyte can verify its authenticity with a Simple (+40) Scholastic Lore (Ecclesiarchy), Common Lore (Imperium) or Common Lore (War) Test.



Euphrica's Chalice

The broken ceramic bowl with which Saint Euphrica slaked her thirst on her century-long pilgrimage lies next to several pieces of parchment that detail stories of her life during her journey. While Saint Euphrica's tale is not widely circulated outside of the Pilgrims, the tale is well documented by Ecclesiarchal scholars.

This relic is false, unfortunately. A Routine (+20) Literacy Test locates a passage in the accompanying documents that describes the bowl gifted to her by the Rogue Trader captain of her Pilgrim vessel after she banished a daemon during a failure in the ships Gellar field. The bowl does not match the one described. Gifts from Rogue Traders are notoriously ostentatious, and this bowl was a simple device of fired clay.

The Tri-Skull of Saint Uther

Three skulls of Saint Uther the Catapult, one at age twelve, one at age fifty, and one at age one hundred and fifty are surprisingly real relics. The first can be verified as Saint Uther's with an Easy (+30) Medicae Test. The second bears markings suffered by Uther on behalf of an Ogryn who was protecting Lord Commissar Erranet that can be authenticated with a Challenging (+0) Common Lore (War) Test. Lastly, the third skull is pitted with shrapnel, a wound that an Easy (+30) Scholastic Lore (Imperial Creed) Test identifies as the ninety-ninth wound that finally killed Saint Uther. This is possible only through a true miracle as many details of the wounds match sealed documents.

Tablets of Drusian Wisdom

This set of eight small palm-sized polished stone tablets are inscribed with inspirational quotes from Saint Drusus, and received the saint's own blessing. A Difficult (-10) Common Lore (Ecclesiarchy or Imperial Creed) Test lets an Acolyte recognise that the Tablets of Drusian Wisdom are reportedly impervious. This is a relatively easy legend to test, damage does indeed fail to harm the tablets. A character in possession of the Tablets of Drusian Wisdom adds +10 to any Willpower Tests to resist Fear, to Trauma Tests and Malignancy Tests.

The Genesis Vestments

These Vestments worn by Saint Drusus at the First Blessing of Scintilla are on display along with a pict-viewer showing Drusus in prayer on a continuous loop. The garment can easily be verified as authentic as they have not left Ecclesiarchal control since he wore them at the ceremonies. However, an Easy (+30) Tech-Use Test can uncover portions of the accompanying data records long buried in the data stacks which have an Inquisitorial encryption. They requires a Hard (-20) Tech-Use Test to decipher. The records contain the audio recording of the vid, capturing the voice of St. Drusus as he speaks a prophetic litany that was suppressed by an Inquisitor long ago.

The Daemonhammer of Saint Agamemnon

A Routine (+20) Forbidden Lore (Inquisition) or Scholastic Lore (Archaic) Test, lets an Acolyte know that a decorative silver-plated hammer is, in fact, a potent artefact. The Daemonhammer of Saint Agamemnon the Just, an Inquisitorial Daemonhunter. Many Inquisitors would be happy to see this weapon back in Inquisitorial hands, although the Ecclesiarchy would argue vociferously that it should be maintained as a relic and not risked in battle. This Sanctified Great Weapon bestows Unnatural Strength (x3) to any attack against a Daemon or Psyker.



THE RIGHTEOUS FEMUR

The Righteous Femur of Saint Brannicus is not on display currently. The Sisters will inform Drook (or the Acolytes if he is not present) that Ignato has taken the femur for study. This happens from time to time. Drook secretly suspects that the Arch-Cardinal doubts the authenticity of the relic. In actuality it is the key to Ignato's secret Forging Wing. Ignato has a servant return the relic after the events in the Synod Hall so that the Acolytes can "inspect" the item.

AREA 6: PENITENTS' CELLS

These gloomy cloisters, with walls and columns of plain stone, are at odds with the opulence of much of the rest of the Sacristy. The only decorations are prayers carved into the columns or the icons that adorn small shrines set into niches in the walls. Cells lead off from the main room, and a sparring area with weapons racks has been set up bounded by the four largest columns. Benches and tables form a communal mess. Whispered prayers can just be heard, and the scent of incense is ever-present.

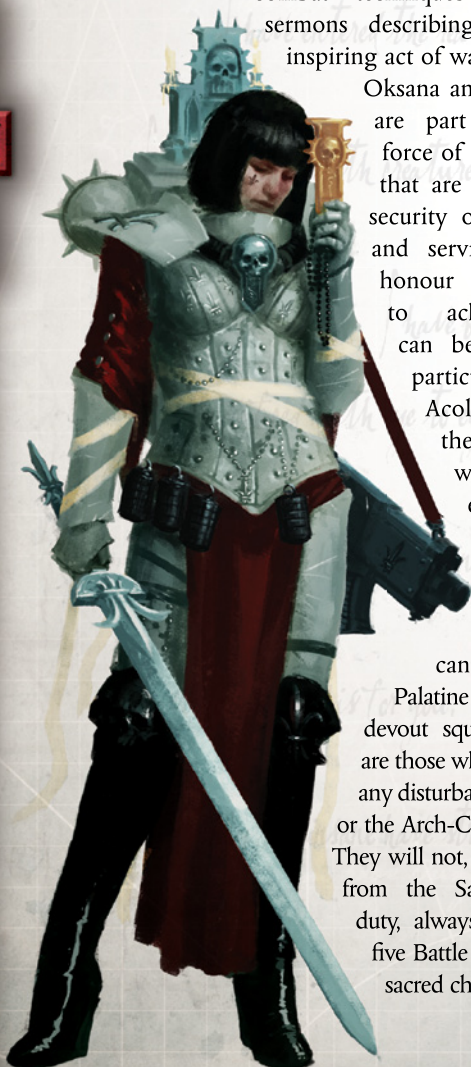
The Penitents' Cells are used to house the cathedral's complement of Sororitas. Hospitaller Superior Brennhilde is the mistress of a small cadre of Hospitaller Novices who tend to the patients in the Hospital, while Palatine Oksana commands a small mission of Adepta Sororitas Celestines tasked with defending the inner Cathedral of Illumination and the Sacristy. All the Sisters live here when not on duty, each in her own cell. The cells are furnished with nothing more than a shelf for books of religious texts, a small chest for clothing and belongings, and a miniature altar for prayer. They are expected to sleep on the floor, and all other facilities are shared.

Brennhilde is here when not on duty in the Hospital. Oksana can usually be found here, drilling her charges in

combat techniques or delivering sermons describing a particularly inspiring act of war or martyrdom.

Oksana and her Celestines are part of the larger force of Adepta Sororitas that are tasked with the security of the cathedral, and serving here is an honour many aspire to achieve. Oksana can be a useful ally, particularly after the Acolytes return from the Underhive with conclusive evidence against "Ignato" and Acolytes who wish to get on her good side can do so here.

Palatine Oksana and her devout squad of Celestines are those who will respond to any disturbance in the Sacristy or the Arch-Cardinal's Quarters. They will not, however, all stray from the Sacristy while on duty, always leaving at least five Battle Sisters within the sacred chamber.



PALATINE OKSANA

Oksana was raised on a Schola Progenium habitat to believe that the absolute authority of the God-Emperor must be backed up by the strength and resolve of His servants. She treats her Celestines sternly, expecting only the most impeccable service from them. She is harshest with herself, however, constantly practicing combat drills and keeping her body honed. She is not on the field of battle as often as she once was and she refuses to allow her position to be an excuse for being in anything but fighting form. Though her posting at the cathedral has involved no combat up until now, she still considers herself a warrior first and is ready at any moment to shed blood in the Emperor's name.

Palatine Oksana

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
45	50	50	40	35	40	45	50	40

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 17

Skills: Awareness +10, Climb +10, Common Lore (Ecclesiarchy) +20, Common Lore (Imperial Creed), Common Lore (War) +10, Command +20, Dodge +10, Forbidden Lore (Heresy), Intimidate +20, Literacy +20, Secret Tongue (Sororitas War Cant) +10, Scholastic Lore (Archaic) +10, Scrutiny +10, Search +10, Speak Language (High Gothic +10)

Talents: Armour of Contempt, Crack Shot, Counter-attack, Deadeye Shot, Die Hard, Fearless, Hatred (Heretics), Iron Discipline, Into the Jaws of Hell, Light Sleeper, Mighty Shot, Nerves of Steel, Quick Draw, Rapid Reload, Resistance (Psychic Powers), Wall of Steel.

Armour: Sororitas Power Armour (7 All, 8 Body). The Sororitas Power Armour grants the user a +5 BS and +10 Strength (already included in her profile).

Weapons: Godwyn-De'az Pattern Bolter (90m, S/2/-, 1d10+5 X, Pen 4, Clip 30, Reload: Full, Tearing, Reliable), Chainsword (1d10+7 R, Pen 2, Balanced, Tearing).

Celestines

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
35	45	45	30	30	25	45	45	35

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 11

Skills: Awareness, Climb, Common Lore (Ecclesiarchy), Common Lore (Imperial Creed), Command, Dodge, Forbidden Lore (Heresy), Intimidate, Literacy, Secret Tongue (Sororitas War Cant), Scrutiny, Speak Language (High Gothic).

Talents: Crack Shot, Die Hard, Hatred (Heretics), Mighty Shot, Nerves of Steel, Rapid Reload.

Armour: Sororitas Power Armour (7 All, 8 Body). The Sororitas Power Armour grants the user a +5 BS and +10 Strength (already included in her profile).

Weapons: Godwyn-De'az Pattern Bolter (90m, S/2/-, 1d10+5 X, Pen 4, Clip 30, Reload: Full, Tearing, Reliable).

AREA 7: SYNOD HALL

A huge circular meeting table dominates this dimly-lit room. In the centre of the table is a squat holo-servitor with its eyes distended into lenses and thick data-cables extending from its head into a nearby cogitator. The high-backed chairs surrounding the table could each be mistaken for thrones. Along the walls are statues of Imperial saints, all facing the centre of the room. The shadowy rafters are haunted by cherubim that drone overhead, emitting cloying incense from their censers.

The Synod Hall is used for meetings of the Calixis Sector's most senior clergy. It is here that matters of religious law and policy are decided that affect billions of the sector's faithful. During the Acolytes' time in the Cathedral of Illumination they have the chance to witness such a meeting of the sector's senior clergy, perhaps after they have settled in and had their first taste of the cathedral's various intrigues. Archivist Drook approaches them and asks them to attend the Arch-Cardinal's next holding of a Synod conference.

GATHERING OF THE SECTOR SYNOD

Drook approaches you, relieved to have finally located you after long searching. 'Ah, wonderful, I've found you. The Arch-Cardinal has called a meeting of the sector Synod and one of the issues to be discussed is the problem of properly investigating and certifying all the many relics of Saint Drusus' life that have surfaced over the years. The Arch-Cardinal has requested that you attend to give your expert opinion on the matter. The Synod convenes in one hour.'

The Acolytes can decide not to turn up to the Synod meeting, while there will be no adverse consequences to this, the Acolytes don't know that, and Drook is quick to point out that it is never wise to let the Arch-Cardinal down.

An aging adept bent under the weight of countless scrolls ushers you into the Synod Hall as a discussion between several high ranking officials is already in progress.

"Humble brethren, maintaining the spiritual health of the Calixis Sector is a daily battle, and every hour it seems there is some new moral failing that infects the people of our respective flocks. Cardinal Jubilatus, we shall come to your matter in a moment. Lady Scaern, let us begin with your concerns about the veracity of Drusian relics."

Lady Scaern is a very old and wizened woman with a dried-out and sour appearance, narrow eyes and a tiny pursed mouth. She is swamped in her clerical robes, and behind her waits a lectern-servitor, a walking bookcase loaded with tomes.

"Indeed, Arch-Cardinal. It has long been a source of distress to those of us who examine the life of Saint Drusus that the proliferation of bones and other physical relics indicates the righteous saint possessed at least eight arms and three skulls. Is this to be ascribed to a miracle of the Emperor's intercession, creating additional body parts of the saint to inspire the people of the Calixis Sector? I understand that we have experts in this matter present. Inspectors of Relics, what are your thoughts?"

This last question is addressed to the Acolytes. Lady Scaern listens to whatever answer they might come up with and the Game Master should call for a Challenging Skill Test appropriate to their answer. Some examples are:

- A Logic Test for pointing out the impossibility of multiple limbs and the dangers of not properly vetting an artefact.
- A Charm or Scholastic Lore (Imperial Creed) Test for acknowledging the existence of multiple relics is indeed a miraculous work of the God-Emperor.
- A Blather Test to simply sound convincing while committing to no one answer.

Depending on how coherent it is, the Acolyte should gain a bonus from +0 (barely coherent) to +30 (beautifully worded and well put). If successful, Lady Scaern thanks them for their input. If the Acolytes fail, she dismisses their opinions with a minimum of politeness.

Arch-Cardinal Ignato then turns to the Acolytes after they have spoken to Lady Scaern and says:

"Many thanks for your expert opinions. And what of the relics in this very cathedral? Have you detected any suspicious items amongst them? It would cause this synod grave distress to discover such heresy beneath this very roof."

If the Acolytes claim that any of the artefacts in the Sacristy are questionable, the Arch-Cardinal promises to provide resources to look deeper into the matter. If they do not mention the Righteous Femur, "Ignato" does not mention it, in hopes that the issue goes away.

If the Acolytes state that none of his artefacts are possible fakes he dismisses them as fools, as he knows full well that some must not be true artefacts.

If the Acolytes mention the missing Righteous Femur Ignato promises to have it returned to the Sacristy for them to study, as soon as he is done with it. He dismisses the Acolytes before they can question him further on the subject.



AREA 8: ARCHIVE

The entrance to this chamber is elevated, and below you stands what appears at first to be a labyrinth. It is constructed of bookcases, arranged apparently without reason or plan, each one reaching halfway up to the high ceiling. Each case groans with hundreds of books. A flight of stairs leads down to an arch permitting entrance to the maze of the archive. On the arch are inscribed the words, "Purity Through Ignorance."

The Archive contains thousands and thousands of books, almost all of them on religious topics. It is staffed by a dozen lectern-servitors, each programmed to fetch books from the shelves and bring them to a reader. Each servitor also has a lectern and reading light built into its back, along with an autoquill and a pot of ink. If the Acolytes know the title of a book, the servitors can fetch it for them, a process which takes several minutes of trundling through the narrow passageways formed by the bookcases. *The Several Spheres of Eternal Faith* and *Matters Concerning The Great Work Of Illumination*, the two books mentioned by K'Taarn, can be acquired by the Acolytes in this way.

Acolytes who do not wish to use the servitors, perhaps wanting to avoid a trail of evidence, can find these books with a Challenging (+0) Search Test, or an Ordinary (+10) Common Lore (Imperial Creed) Test. If they succeed, they find the books deep in the labyrinth, having decoded the arcane and inaccurate system of shelving by subject. If they fail they cannot find the books and must ask a lectern-servitor to find them instead. Acquiring *Matters Concerning The Great Work Of Illumination* is essential to the plot of the adventure and so Acolytes should always be able to find it through one of these methods.

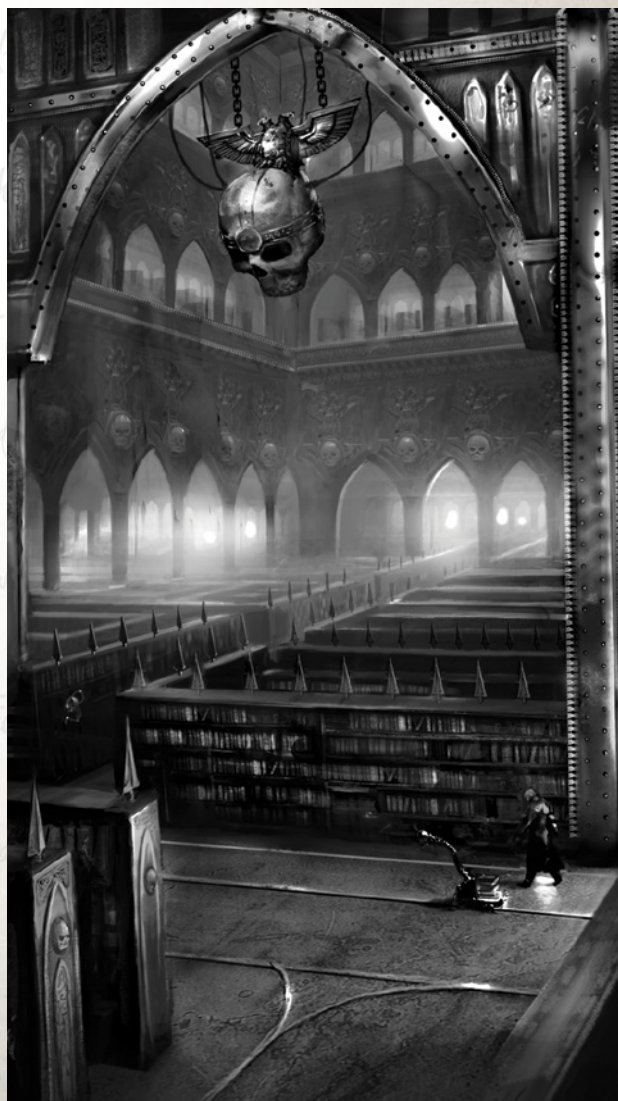
The Several Spheres of Eternal Faith is a series of bizarre religious observances by Wurmiaous, written three thousand years ago. Its dense style conceals descriptions of the monk's visions, always apocalyptic and surreal in nature, from huge severed heads falling from the sky to whole planets erupting in mountainous cancers or stars opening up into vast and terrible eyes. An Ordinary (+10) Logic Test unravels enough of Wurmiaous' visions to ascertain that he was completely mad and that no meaningful message appears to be contained within his observances.

Matters Concerning The Great Work Of Illumination is a rather more mundane work. It is an account of various phases of the construction of the Cathedral of Illumination. It has a great many diagrams and lists of statistics, all of which suggest the titanic effort made in constructing the cathedral and its enormous expense, mostly footed by Ecclesiarchal tithes or payments by Scintilla's noble houses. An Acolyte reading the book is struck by one particular fact – that the cathedral once sported a wing for private prayer, reserved for the most senior of dignitaries, which had its entrance in the spot where the altarpiece now stands in the cathedral nave. This section of the book notes that the wing was sealed off several hundred years ago and, via a scribbled footnote, that suggestions it should be opened up again a few decades ago were refuted by Arch-Cardinal Ignato. Shortly after this Ignato ordered the construction of the magnificent altarpiece. This information, which should help lead the Acolytes to the hidden Forging Wing, is crucial, and the Acolytes should be aware of the sealed wing's connection to Ignato.

AREA 9: GARDEN OF REPOSE

This interior garden is a beautiful and peaceful place, seemingly insulated from the troubles of the galaxy at large. Soaring willows reach over a babbling artificial brook and deep, lush grass carpets the floor underfoot. A grove of trees and rocks creates a natural place of rest and contemplation beside the brook. The garden is lit with simulated sunlight from globes hanging from the ceiling – not the relentless heat of Hive Tarsus and its desert, but the gentle warmth of a summer's day. The sound of water and birdsong complete the illusion that you stand in a pastoral paradise, far away from Scintilla.

This little slice of paradise exists as a place of contemplation and reflection for the use of the Cathedral's senior clergy. As guests the Acolytes are permitted into the Garden of Repose, but it is normally used only by "Ignato." When the Acolytes return to the Cathedral from the underhive with evidence of "Ignato's" wicked plans, it is here that they will find him and where the showdown with Vrainne is likely to occur.



OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER: VENOMSKIN'S ENVOY

The GM can introduce Venomskin's envoy to allow more combat-orientated Acolytes a chance to show off their skills. This encounter can take place in a variety of locations—the Cathedral of Illumination is a large place after all—but is generally best suited to be played out in any of the high-roofed corridors between the major locations within the Cathedral.

The many grand hallways that wind throughout the Cathedral are no less magnificent than the rooms they to which they lead. Vibrant tapestries and devotional statues are beautifully lit by skylights mounted high in the ceiling, and the occasional incense burner instils a sense of calm that is far removed from the scorching hive outside. Small groups of priests can occasionally be found in the hallways, discussing esoteric points of the Imperial faith and the teachings of St. Drusus.

As they pass between areas the Acolytes can occasionally make Challenging (+0) Perception, or Easy (+20) Awareness Tests to notice something out of place. If successful, read the following:

You notice the hood of a robed priest has fallen away from his forehead for a brief moment. As he replaces the hood, you assess the man's brutal face; it has seen many years of hardship. But it is a small, closed eye near his temple that is the most troubling aspect of the man. The eye glows faintly, and the man seems suddenly aware that this blight upon his flesh has been seen. As if to answer an unspoken question the other 'priests' are already reaching for weapons hidden within their robes...

Combat against Spiker and the other Thugs takes place near a T-junction of the Cathedral hallways. Cover is limited, but the Acolytes and their foes are free to hide in small alcoves formed by the halls archways.

Spiker is accompanied by several Thugs disguised as priests. There are two Thugs for every Acolyte, although there should not be more than six of them in total (including Spiker). They will fight to the death, as they know to prefer a quick death in combat to the long executions they will suffer at the hands of the Ecclesiarchy. Gunfire is likely to draw the attention of the Cathedral's unit of Celestines. It is up to the GM to decide when help arrives.

The Acolytes can search Spiker's body to find a sealed tube containing a letter:

Stained with dirt and blood, the lead ganger has a small envelope in a pocket within his robes. While several pages have been rendered illegible, the last page has a passage still untouched by ichor.

"...regret to inform you that the situation within the Blinding Gulch is rapidly becoming untenable. The gang warfare, something far below your own station, is increasing exponentially and I fear it will not be long before someone uses their knowledge of my location as a bargaining chip with the Magistratum.

I need to relocate as soon as possible. However, the deadlines you have placed upon my work will make this very difficult to accomplish without additional assistance. I have sent my envoy..."

If the Acolytes manage to subdue Spiker they will have limited time to questions him before the scuffle is noticed and the alarm is raised. The Acolytes have one chance, either via a Difficult (-10) Intimidate Test or a Very Hard (-30) Charm Test. Spiker will only answer that he was sent here to personally deliver a message, but he doesn't know who too. The Acolytes can acquire the letter he has before the Celestines arrive to take Spiker and his thugs. They execute Spiker on the spot, for daring to bring his mutated form into the Cathedral and the rest of the thugs will no doubt suffer a similar fate.

Spiker



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
40	32	50	40	41	38	36	30	31

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 14

Skills: Awareness, Blather +10, Charm, Command, Common Lore (Underworld), Dodge, Deceive +10, Sleight of Hand, Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic)

Talents: Crushing Blow, Heightened Senses (Sight), Iron Jaw, Quick Draw, True Grit

Traits: Dark Sight, Sturdy.

Armour: Assorted Iron Plates (3 Arms and Legs, 5 Body)

Weapons: Shock Maul (1D10+7 I, Pen 0, Shocking)*

Gear: Ill-fitting Priest Robes (Good Quality Clothing)

*Includes Strength Bonus and Crushing Blow

Thugs



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
40	32	50	40	33	38	36	30	31

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 12

Skills: Awareness Common Lore (Underworld), Dodge, Deceive, Speak Language (Low Gothic)

Talents: Quick Draw

Armour: Old Flak Vest (3, Body)

Weapons: Club (1D10+3 I, Pen 0)*, Stub Special (30m, S/-/-, 1d10 I, Pen 0, Clip 9)

Gear: Priest Robes (Good Quality Clothing), 2 Stub Special Reloads

*Includes Strength Bonus



AREA 10: CATACHUMENS' CLOISTER

This grim and shadowed circular wing of the Cathedral is hung with gibbets, in which languish skeletons that look many years old. The walls are inscribed with gruesome scenes of trial by ordeal and the martyrdom of various Imperial saints. The shadowed colonnades surround a circular central chamber with occult symbols carved into the floor, the air thick with incense and the whole place lit by hundreds of candles sconced on the walls and ceiling. The echoes of religious rituals and questioning seem to reverberate off the walls, like the sound of distant screaming just out of hearing range.

The Catachumens' Cloister is where budding clergymen are put through a rigorous cycle of ritualised questionings and cleansings to purify their souls and prepare them for a life of religious service. Its less advertised purpose is as the site of exorcisms carried out by the Cloister's fearsome inhabitant, Exorcist Amortus. Amortus serves as a spiritual policeman for the Cathedral, and is often called upon to banish daemons from the cathedral's noble patrons. He does not do this for the Inquisition, who have their own methods of dealing with such matters, but the Imperial Church creates more than enough call for his skills.

Amortus can normally be found in the Cloister and is likely to cross paths with the Acolytes should they seek to exorcise

the daemon inhabiting Caius Moy, Lector Xavieticus' friend. Amortus can accompany them to Moy's room in the Hospital, and concludes that Moy is in the grip of a degenerative daemonic possession which must be exorcised immediately lest Moy's soul be completely consumed. Amortus is quick to blame the Hospital's staff for missing such a grave case of possession, and demands the Acolytes' help in completing an exorcism.

THE EXORCISM OF MOY

Exorcising the daemon in Moy is too deep and severe a ritual to be dealt with by one faithful alone, and in the absence of other dedicated exorcists at the cathedral (they are all off elsewhere seeing to the spiritual ailments of the Calixis Sector) Amortus requires rugged, experienced individuals like the Acolytes to assist him.

For Amortus' own brand of the exorcism ritual, one Acolyte (the most physically strong) serves as the Pardoner, which serves to ensure the victim being exorcised does not fight back against the attempts to force the daemon out of him (the role's name comes from the fact that the victim cannot control his actions at this point, and that the Pardoner forgives him at the same time as restraining him). The other Acolytes are termed Celebrants of the Emperor's Will, while Amortus takes on the duties the Arch-Exorcist.

For the first stage of the ritual, Moy is laid out on the floor of the circular chamber, wrapped in a white grave shroud. Amortus reads the ritual's preamble.

"We call upon His majesty and power to drive from our presence the Enemy, an abomination of the Dark Powers that cleaveth not to the law of Man and Nature. Cast Out! By the God-Emperor's light, burn! His wrath let it tremble! Celebrants! Pardoner! Let us begin!"

Amortus pulls a small vial from his robes and sprinkles holy water over Moy, as the drops spatter upon his skin he writhes growling. Amortus, unshaken by Moy's feral reactions, makes a motion to the Branding-Cherub. It darts forward, reaching to apply its brand to Moy's forehead. The man convulses and sits bolt upright, narrowly avoiding the super heated metal.

Amortus shouts, "Hold him down Pardoner!"

To restrain him, the Pardoner must make a Routine (+20) Strength Test. If this Test is passed, Amortus burns a brand into Moy's face in the shape of an Aquila. If the Test is failed, Amortus is unable to make the brand cleanly and the iron merely scars the side of Moy's head. Amortus mutters that it is an ill omen for the branding to have gone awry, but continues with the ritual.

Moy's scream of pain distorts, the sounds of metal scraping metal crawls forth from his throat. Invisible hands claw at the hems of Amortus robe, small tears opening along the blue lining.

Amortus turns to the Celebrants and shouts over the wind, "Now, brethren, by the fury of your curses and the foulness of your tongues, bid this daemon depart our brother Caius Moy!"

The Celebrants must try to drive out the daemon with imaginative and foul curses, while Amortus continues to pray. Each Celebrant can do this with an Ordinary (+10) Intimidate or Performance Test, or a Routine (+20) Scholastic Lore (Imperial



EXORCIST AMORTUS

A heavily-built, muscular man, Amortus is outspoken in his belief that individual freedom, happiness, or even survival should be considered of secondary importance to spiritual strength. In his youth he was a travelling confessor, exorcist, and organiser of trials by ordeal, and has much affection for the rough and ready justice that sees witches burned at the stake. He thinks the clergy at the cathedral are too soft, and that the bodies of sinners should be hanging on the main gates to remind pilgrims that the Emperor's mercy has its limits.

In combat, Amortus will shout litanies, bolstering his allies with Litany of Hate. If the Daemonhost Moy resorts to melee attacks, Amortus will attempt to gain the daemons attention, making Guarded Attacks actions to ward off the beasts strikes.

Creed) Test. Performer Tests must be made using a relevant Performer skill such as Acting or Poetry, at the Game Master's discretion. A character trained in Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) gains a +10 bonus to this Test whatever skill they use.

If half or more of the Celebrants succeed in their Test, their curses are vituperative and vicious enough to force the daemon out of Moy part of the way. The daemon's form, a horrific multi-faced monster with mouths full of fangs set into its skin, appears ghosted translucently over Moy's body. Moy himself moans in distress and the daemon's chattering and gibbering are just audible from across the Veil. If more than half of the Celebrants fail their Test, Moy's body contorts and begins to smoulder, scarlet veins appearing in a crazed pattern against his skin, accompanied by the smell of burning flesh.

"Focus! Fear not the daemon! Despise him only, and by your strength of spirit see him banished! Drive him from your own minds, so that he shall be driven also from the soul of our brother!"

The third stage sees the daemon inside Moy fighting back. Flashes of obscene images – hellish battlefields, heaving masses of mutated flesh, whole worlds teeming with daemons – fill the Acolytes' minds. The Celebrants and the Pardoner must make Ordinary (+10) Willpower Tests to focus on driving the daemon's influence from their minds. Acolytes with the Mental Fortress or Unshakeable Faith Talents gain +10 to this Test. An Acolyte who fails this Test gains 1 Insanity Point and D3 Corruption Points from this unwholesome contact with a daemonic entity.

If half or more of the Acolytes succeed at this Test, the daemon lets out a terrible cry of pain and frustration, a piercing sound that shakes the stones of the cloister. If more than half of the Acolytes fail, eyes open up in Moy's face, wide, unblinking, bloodshot eyes that roll back in their sockets.

Regardless of the successes or failures so far, Moy's body stiffens and rises to its feet as if lifted by invisible hands and Warfire leaks from Moy's eyes.

At this point the ritual is completed. Of the three parts of the ritual (the Pardoner's first test, the Celebrants' curses, or the Acolytes' resisting the daemon), if two or more have succeeded then the ritual is a success.

If the ritual is successful, the daemon is forced out of Moy's body and back to the Warp. If the ritual fails, Caius Moy dies as the daemon inside him manifests within his body and uses it to attack Amortus and the Acolytes. His face distorts into the fanged visage of the daemon, eyes and mouths open all over his body, and he lurches monstrosly across the chamber to attack random Acolytes. The daemon will be banished back to the Warp if defeated in this form, but there is no way to save Moy himself.

After the exorcism, whatever its result, Xavieticus is grateful to the Acolytes. If Moy has been saved he is overjoyed that his friend lives. If Moy died, he is glad that the Acolytes tried their best and reasons that Moy is probably better off dead and waiting at the Emperor's side than living on with the daemon inside him. Xavieticus now hands the Acolytes the communications that implicate "Ignato" in suspicious activities, and which contain the symbol code for the door to the Forging Wing.

The Daemonhost Moy is a powerful and dangerous adversary who, if he manifests, will attack immediately. He makes use of his Bio-Lightning and Fling psychic powers, but uses his claws only when forced too (he will attempt to use Bio-Lightning against Acolytes who engage him in melee). He does not know his own strength (yet), and now is the best opportunity to stop him.

The Acolytes can certainly fetch the Sisters under the command of Palatine Oksana, who can help defeat the beast, a process that takes approximately 5 rounds.

Daemonhost Moy



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
36	34	53	47	14	79	53	69	29

Movement: 1/2/3/6

Wounds: 30

Skills: Awareness +10, Deceive +20, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology, Heresy & Warp) +20, Psyniscience +20, Speak Language (All) +20.

Traits: Daemonic, Fear (2), Flyer (1), From Beyond, Natural Weapons (Claws), Psy Rating (5), Unnatural Strength (x2).

Weapons: Claws (1d10+15, Pen 0).

Psychic Power: Bio-Lightning, Douse Flames, Fling.

Seeming Normality: The Daemonhost Moy may choose to appear to be perfectly normal, except for a far-off muttering sound that anyone near Moy can hear. He may choose to appear normal and beg for mercy. The Acolytes would not be fooled.

Exorcist Amortus



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
38	22	41	42	27	31	29	45	33

Movement: 2/4/6/8

Wounds: 10

Skills: Awareness, Common Lore (Imperial Creed) +20, Deceive +20, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology, Heresy & Warp) +20, Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) +20.

Talents: Armour of Contempt, Crushing Blow, Fearless, Hardy, Hatred (Daemons), Iron Jaw, Jaded, Litany of Hate.

Armour: Shield Robes (3 All)

Weapons: Staff (1d10+4, Pen 0, Balanced).

AREA 11: THE FORGING WING

The Forging Wing is located behind the altarpiece within the Nave, accessed with the pictograph pass-code that Xavieticus possesses. Once the Acolytes have discovered its location (in the Archive) and possess the pass-code or the key they are able to enter the Forging Wing to uncover evidence of Ignato's crimes.

SACRAMENTAL CELLAR

The musty darkness contrasts with the light of the Nave above. Down a narrow flight of stairs is a dark low-ceilinged room of stone, choked with dust and cobwebs. Though it has not been cleaned or maintained for decades, a few footprints visible in the dust on the steps suggests that someone, at least, has been here recently. Arched alcoves in the walls of the room below hold racks filled with jars of unguent, bottles of fine wine, and neatly stacked candles. A few sconces mounted on the walls hold unlit torches, and too little light filters down from the Nave to illuminate anything beyond the area in front of the steps.

This room was used long ago to store a variety of items for various feasts and sacraments, but it has been forgotten and fallen into disuse. "Ignato" took advantage of it to create the false religious texts, with the help of the underhive forger Venomskin, that he hopes will plunge the Calixis Sector into religious conflict. The cellar and the attached rooms are dark and, without bringing a light source with them or taking valuable time to light the various torches and candles, the Acolytes have to fight this area's combats in the dark.

The cellar's exit is at the opposite end of the cellar from the stairs. To get to it, the Acolytes must contend with the two arco-flagellants that guard against intruders. An arco-flagellant lurks in each of the small side areas, and when they detect movement they demand, "Code-Phrase" in unison. If the code-phrase is not given immediately, the arco-flagellants leap to attack and fight until disabled. Due to their state of disrepair, any Acolyte may attempt to shut them down by succeeding on a Hard (-20) Decieve Test.

Dilapidated Arco-Flagellant

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
40	—	(8) 40	40	(8) 40	10	20	40	—

Movement: 8/16/24/48

Wounds: 20

Skills: Awareness +10.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Berserk Charge, Blind Fighting, Combat Master, Crushing Blow, Die Hard, Dual Strike, Fearless, Furious Assault, Hatred (Heretics), Iron Jaw, Lightning Reflexes, Rapid Reaction, Two-Weapon Wielder.

Traits: Fear 1, Machine (3), Programmed Instinct, Trigger Word, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Agility (x2), Unnatural Senses, Unnatural Speed.

Armour (Machine): Head 3, Arms 3, Body 3, Legs 3.

Weapons: An arco-flagellant's arms both end in implanted Cutting Claws (1d10+10R, Pen 0, Primitive).

Blind: Some heresies are such that even to look upon them is to condemn oneself. The arco-flagellant is one of these people. The conversion process removed the eyes, replacing them with an augur array that allows it to function as if it had sight. It cannot be fooled by camouflage or visual trickery.

Trigger Word: Most arco-flagellant will remain in passive mode until given a specific code word or phrase, which activates their combat programming. These arco-flagellants have no command word, and instead attack anyone who isn't Arch-Cardinal Ignato or Venomskin.

Programmed Instinct: An arco-flagellant fights in a frenzy, and must use its Berserk Charge Talent (if possible) when it first enters combat. Once in melee, it uses Swift Attack.

Unnatural Senses: The arco-flagellant's augury array allows it to "see" objects and people out to a range of 30 metres, ignoring darkness and all but the densest of obstruction.

MINDSLAVE CHAMBER

This circular room looks like it was once a private chapel or vestment chamber. Now, it is used for a much more sinister purpose. Four scribe-servitors are held in arcane devices against the wall with elaborate helms attached by wires and tubes to the lecterns in front of them. On each lectern is a stack of parchment sheets. Several pages covered in cramped, scribbled words lie in the damp puddles on the floor. The faint hum of power thrums through the room. Light from the eyes of the servitors scatters across the room, offering dim illumination.

The servitors are clergy used as mindslaves to generate religious text for "Ignato's" false holy books. The mindslaves toil away in the darkness, their eyes softly glowing.

The bodies of the mindslaves are covered in medical scars and dressed in plain medical smocks. A Routine (+20) Search Test identifies tattoos among the scars suggesting the bodies belong to people educated at a Schola Progenium habitat, where orphans of Imperial citizens are educated and from which many clergy are recruited into the Ecclesiarchy. They also have lines from prayers tattooed or scarred onto them, further suggesting the bodies belong to clergy. Apart from this there is no way to identify who the bodies belong to or where they came from.

Each works on loose sheets of paper, copying a single sheet directly from their lectern. They appear to be pages from a book titled *The Vision of St. Drusus*, which none of the Acolytes have ever heard of before. These pages are marked with both volume and number, suggesting that the servitors are currently beginning work on Volume Four.

An Easy (+30) Trade (Copyist) Test lets the Acolyte know that these servitors copy each page dozens of times before moving on to a new page. These pages are then collated and bound. This suggests that dozens of copies of Volumes One, Two, and Three have already been completed.

A Hard (-20) Scholastic Lore (Ecclesiarchy) Test reveals that these books fill a small gap in the life of St. Drusus. They tell of a time when Drusus doubted his abilities and looked to a Cardinal for guidance.

VENOMSKIN'S WORKSHOP

This chamber resembles an oubliette or natural grotto, apparently formed from erosion and subsidence among the stone foundations of the cathedral. A large writing desk and racks of parchments and writing implements look out of place in such rough surroundings. A pile of gutted spines and torn pages fills one corner of the room, and hundreds of bottles of ink in various colours are lined up on the floor.

In this grotto Venomskin, until recently, worked creating false religious tomes for "Ignato." On the desk are three such false tomes, nearly completed. Their spines are antique but the pages are clearly new, for Venomskin has not yet aged them to match the spines. The surface and drawers of the desk contain an array of quills, craftsman's tools, set squares and guides, and all manner of other forging tools. In one drawer is Ignato's orders to Venomskin, a crucial clue which sets Acolytes off on the hunt for Venomskin and the next stage of the adventure.

The first book is entitled *The Life of Drusus*. It purports to be an account of Saint Drusus' life, including extensive quotations from his own sermons. These sermons include several versions of a prophecy; after Drusus' death the Calixis Sector will fall into moral decay, and the nadir of this decay will be marked when the 'Dread Star of Sin' rises and brings catastrophe with it as it moves through the sector. Drusus exhorts the faithful to take up arms when this star rises and puts the sinners to death, for only by violence and strife can the Calixis Sector be made fit for pious Emperor-fearing citizens to live in. The 'Dread Star of Sin' clearly refers to the Tyrant Star, Komus, which has plagued the Calixis Sector of late.

The second book is a collection of observances and prophecies concerning the Tyrant Star. Many of them are old and well-known prophecies, the same legends and ancient verses collected by the Tyrantine Cabal in their quest to comprehend the Tyrant Star's appearance. Others, however, are newly-written, and describe the Tyrant Star as the herald of a great upheaval for the Calixis Sector, which will see either an irreversible slide into sin and depravity, or the rising up of the sector's faithful to put the sinful to death. The blood of sinners, one prominent prophecy reads, is the only way to quench the terrible fires of the Tyrant Star.

The third book, *The Blessed Word of Saint Drusus Upon Matters of Morality and Piety*, is supposedly written by Saint Drusus himself. It is a philosophical work in which Saint Drusus explains at length the various justifications for the use of violence for religious purposes. His conclusion is that it is not only valid for the faithful to use violence to punish heretics and further the Imperial Creed, but that such violence should be viewed as an obligation for the faithful.

All three books are clearly fakes but once the forger's work is completed, they will appear to be genuine.

The second crucial piece of evidence is a folded sheet of parchment on which Venomskin's orders have been written. They name Venomskin as the forger, and indicate that he has returned to the underhive of Gunmetal City to fetch equipment essential to the most complex parts of the forgery.

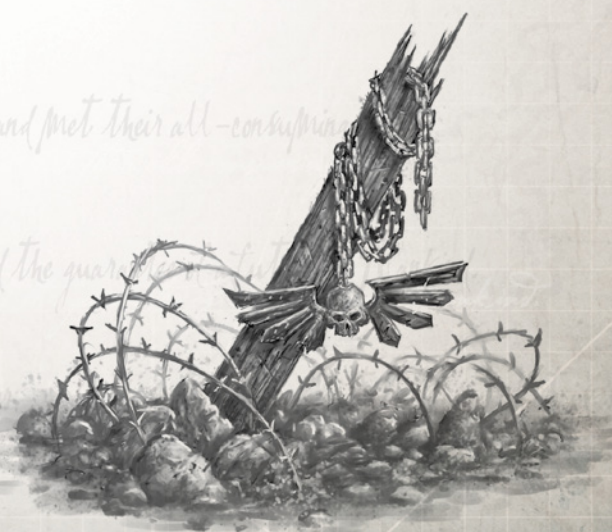
HUNTING VENOMSKIN

Once the Acolytes have uncovered the evidence from the Forging Wing, "Ignato" becomes aware of their investigations and disappears from the cathedral, citing pressing Ecclesiarchal business to the other clergy. He cannot be found at this point, but the Acolytes have a new lead – Venomskin.

The name 'Venomskin' is enough to get a lead on the notorious forger. Any Acolyte from Gunmetal City, with a Noble background, or having the Common Lore (Underworld) skill trained, automatically recalls the information that Venomskin is a skilled forger who can sometimes be contracted in the Blinding Gulch region of Gunmetal City's underhive. He is the source of several fake plays, religious works, volumes of poetry, historical documents and other valuable writings that have in many cases passed between Scintilla's noble houses for huge sums of money. It is widely assumed that only a fraction of his fakes have been discovered, and that many noble libraries still contain faked documents that Venomskin created, and that are still assumed to be real. If none of the Acolytes meet the above requirements, Palatine Oksana has heard the name, and can give them the necessary information.

Venomskin has been quiet for a couple of years and is assumed to have been incarcerated or killed, but rumours of a new fake of his still surface from time to time. Though Venomskin was long associated with the Blinding Gulch region, attempts to find him were stymied by the local gangs protecting him, local authorities do not have the manpower to thoroughly investigate the area and no one has ever had a good description of him.

A trip to Blinding Gulch is in the cards for the Acolytes, although they should have time to resupply and recover from any nastiness at the cathedral before they start their journey into Gunmetal City's violent underbelly, a region of volcanic upheaval, crime, and quick death known as the Infernis.



TROUBLESHOOTING

During this first chapter, the Acolytes must find their way into the Forging Wing to find the evidence that leads them to Venomskin. If the Acolytes get stalled in their investigation, there are a few ways to get them back on track;

- If the Acolytes do not suspect the Femur or are not willing to break into Ignato's private chambers, then K'Taarn will escape the hospital and find the Acolytes. In a fit he draws the symbols on the hand of an Acolyte. He then passes out, muttering "beneath the daemons."
- If the Acolytes do not have the requisite skills to deal with the Sacristy relics, then they will have to bluff their way through the meeting with the Sector Synod. The femur, however, is eventually returned. When it is, Drook will come fetch the Acolytes and tell them that they may now inspect the relic.
- If the Acolytes believe they have enough evidence to charge Ignato now, remind them that they have no proof that Ignato has any knowledge of the Forging Wing, and that while this may cause him disgrace, it will not be enough to prove his heresy.

EXPERIENCE AND DOWNTIME

Following this chapter is an opportunity to award experience and allow the players some downtime while they travel to Gunmetal City. They may also wish to shop, as Gunmetal City has some of the best Bolt and Solid Projectile weaponsmiths in the sector. All Bolt or Solid Projectile weapons with a Rarity of Scarce or more common reduce their Rarity by one step in Gunmetal City.

Experience Earned: Each player should earn at least 300 xp. If you are using the detail-based experience method, use the following.

Experience Earned:

- Base: 100 xp
- Successfully Saved Moy: 100 xp
- Failed to Save Moy, but banished the Daemon: 50 xp
- For each relic the Acolytes verified or proved false: 25 xp
- If the Acolytes did not reveal themselves to anyone: 50 xp
- Discovering that the Righteous Femur is a key: 50 xp
- Uncovering Ignato's secret code: 50 xp





BAD DAY AT BLINDING GULCH

INVESTIGATIONS IN
BLINDING GULCH

•

THE ACOLYTES ARRIVAL

•

THE SHOWDOWN

•

VENOMSKINS LAIR

CHAPTER II: BAD DAY AT BLINDING GULCH

"Come one, come all! Pierce the veil and learn the future! No refunds for predictions of doom!"

—Hawker at the Hidden Sun Fair

In this part of **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED**, the Acolytes must descend into the underhive of Gunmetal City to arrest Venomskin and question him.

Acolytes can hire basic transport into the Infernis for 15 Thrones per Acolyte. This gets them a ramshackle, uncomfortable tracked vehicle driven by a sullen and evil-smelling pair of brothers who look about seventy years of age, although they are actually much younger. For 50 Thrones each they can hitch a ride on a semi-legitimate trade caravan, with basic amenities and a staff of cargo handlers, led by an intrepid veteran of underhive expeditions. A sum of 100 Thrones each allows the Acolytes to hire an articulated armoured transport with a dedicated and well-appointed passenger car, with a small but efficient crew, which is usually used for wealthy passengers on illicit business in the Infernis. This last option will draw a great deal of attention, adding a +1 Reputation Modifier to the group's total. The crews of these transports are non-combatants. Before the first encounter in the Infernis (see The Skirmish Site, below), the Acolytes must make Toughness checks to represent the arduousness of their journey. This Test is Challenging (+0) if they took the cheapest transport, Routine (+20) for the caravan, or Easy (+30) if they took the most expensive option. An Acolyte who fails this Test begins the Skirmish Site encounter with one level of Fatigue.

The industrial middle hive levels of Gunmetal City give way to the volcanic warrens of the Infernis. Sweltering channels, cut through lead walls formed from rivers of cooled liquid metal, create oppressive caverns where clusters of shanty towns huddle together as if for protection. Roads of baked earth wind through the rock, affording the occasional glimpse of an underground landscape rolling between two strata of rock, lakes of lava, or boiling mud bubbling up from below. The air is infernally hot. Poverty and desperation are everywhere, from the executed sinners strung up along the roads to the beggars that lurk by the crossroads pleading for hand-outs of food. In small patches, Gunmetal City's volcanic foundations give way to hab-domes or factories collapsed down from the middle hive above, strange nuggets of ragged civilisation in this bleak and lawless place.

Acolytes may question the beggars, roadside peddlers,

wandering ascetics, and random madmen they meet on the road about Blinding Gulch. This requires a Challenging (+0) Inquiry Test. Passing this Test grants the following basic information: Blinding Gulch is a medium-sized, relatively stable Infernis settlement built next to a Hive Fall. This Hive Fall is a stream of detritus, sewage, and industrial waste that mingles with molten iron from the middle hive levels above, which the inhabitants of Blinding Gulch use long metal nets to sift through to find things to barter and sell. Also close to town is a sluice gate—a large, metal dam which feeds into an artificial channel. This channel is filled with magma, the superheated, mineral-rich remains of the arms manufacturing taking place several hundred metres above. In the middle of the night, every night, the sluice is opened, pouring the day's scrap metal in lava-form, out into the channel. There, it flows and cools, and the people of Blinding Gulch come out to mine the shores, harvesting and recycling the materials to be resold to the middle-hive. These are valuable resources by Infernis standards, so Blinding Gulch has long been the subject of power struggles between violent gangs whose influence passes for law and government in the Infernis. An extra Degree of Success on the Inquiry Test reveals that two gangs, Skarit's Dragons and the Cadavers, are currently vying for control over Blinding Gulch, but that neither gang has achieved superiority over the other for the two years or so that they have been fighting.



RADICAL VS. TRADITIONAL

The first question your Acolytes may ask, once they become somewhat familiar with the locale, is "Can anyone think of a good reason not to call down upon this town the full weight of the Inquisition?" In theory, the answer is "No." The Ordo Hereticus exists to deal with mutants, rogue psykers and cultists. Everyone in this town is either one of those three, or closely related enough to warrant a full investigation (after all, gangers are just cultists without conviction). However, calling in the Enforcers to arrest everyone will be completely fruitless; the sheer amount of time it would take to accomplish such an endeavour would be well beyond the scope of the adventure itself. Thus, this portion of the adventure assumes that the PCs are not consumed by such staunch traditionalism that they would give up any hope of capturing Venomskin just to rid an underhive of a few hundred mutants.

In contrast, there are few actions the PCs may take that go unnoticed by the underhive itself. From the moment they arrive, the Acolytes are being watched and judged by their new and temporary peers: the citizenry of Blinding Gulch. This judgement is represented by a Reputation Modifier, which is generated at pivotal moments in the story by the characters' successes or failures. Keep track of their Reputation Modifier, but keep it a secret from your players. Perhaps they will catch on that the more people like them, the easier it will be to pump them for information. Perhaps they will not.

-9 to -1: The townsfolk have embraced you as one of their own. They trust you with their secrets, invite you to dinner and may or may not have betrothed one of their daughters to you. You gain a +20 to all Fellowship-related Skill Tests within the confines of Blinding Gulch.

0 to 8: The people of Blinding Gulch have accepted your presence as one that must be tolerated. They still view you as outsiders, but lack either the desire or the firepower to run you out on the nearest mag-rail. No bonuses or penalties on Interaction Tests.

9 to 15: Regardless of any threats you may have made, the town of Blinding Gulch is quite concerned by your presence. Many brokers of information have gone underground, both figuratively and literally. Interaction Tests are at -10, while Inquiry Tests are at -20.

16 to 20: The people of Blinding Gulch are actively revolting against you. Whether motivated by fear, hatred, or pure xenophobia, the townsfolk are taking a very active role in thwarting any attempts you make at an investigation. Interaction Tests are at -20, and Inquiry Tests are not even possible. Almost any attempts to gather information around town must be made using Interrogation and torture techniques.

21+: Disaster. At this point, terms like "Public Execution" and "Surgical Strike" are being tossed around town on both sides, yours and the enemies'. Once this stage in "Public Relations" has been reached, it is no longer possible to proceed to Act Three of this adventure. Most likely, your group has squads of Imperial Guard rounding up all deviants to be processed, interrogated, and executed. Venomskin will never be found, and Blinding Gulch will become a ghost town, lost to paperwork and history.

Calculating your starting Reputation Modifier: Reputation is based on twin aspects of what the townspeople think of the characters and what the townspeople think the characters think of them. Beginning with a score of zero (0), add one (+1) for each Noble-born party member, whilst subtracting one (-1) for Metallican-born characters (-2 if they are a Metallican Gunslinger, due to the prestige gun fighters have in small towns, such as Blinding Gulch). Each Scum grants a -1 to the score, while each Arbitrator gives +1. The Peer Talents (Underhives, Underworld, Mutants, Psykers, The Insane) result in a -1, while Good Reputation with any of these groups gives a -2. Conversely, any Enemy talent with these groups gives a +2. Each Bonus is cumulative, so a Scum that is a Metallican Gunslinger would proved a -3 modifier. After all bonuses and negatives are accounted for, the resulting number is the Reputation Modifier for the Acolytes at the beginning of this Act.



II: BAD DAY AT BLINDING GULCH



THE SKIRMISH SITE

The Acolytes, having discovered that heretical works are being produced by a forger known as Venomskin, begin this leg of their investigation by travelling to Blinding Gulch, deep beneath the hive of Gunmetal City.

Within a short hike of Blinding Gulch, your transport turns to take another road and bids you farewell. The glowing cascade of the Hive Falls can be seen a couple of miles ahead, across a landscape of dried lava and outcrops of igneous rock. A short way along the road lies a tangle of bodies, each bearing the familiar signs of a violent death. Some of the dead wear bronze and steel plates binged into suits of armour, while others are armoured in riveted leather and have faces covered in black and white war paint.

This is the site of a recent skirmish between a group of Skarit's Dragons and the Cadavers. Half a dozen lie dead from each side. A cursory examination shows they died from gunshot wounds, although the weapons seem to have been stripped from the bodies.

Watching over the skirmish site is a survivor, Breshk of the Cadavers. He has a severe leg wound and cannot make it back to the relative safety of Blinding Gulch on his own. He is armed with a salvaged hunting rifle, with the intent of killing anyone who comes close enough to threaten him, and has taken cover concealed behind an outcropping of rock. Seeing the Acolytes are not Skarit's Dragons members, he shouts a warning to them before opening fire.

A lone voice calls out, "Still yourselves! I sighted you! Hands to the roof and your business, now!" The glint of a rifle scope twinkles from behind a small outcropping of rocks.

An Ordinary (+10) Scrutiny Test reveals that the voice comes from someone clearly on edge, who is likely to pull the trigger as soon as he feels threatened. Acolytes have the chance to talk down Breshk before he opens fire, which requires a Challenging (+0) Charm Test or Difficult (-10) Intimidate Test. If they fail these Tests (or do not try to make them at all), Breshk loses his nerve and opens fire.

If the Acolytes talk down Breshk or subdue rather than kill him, they can deal with him peacefully. He asks that they take him with them to Blinding Gulch, where other members of the Cadavers can find him and where he will probably be protected from the Skarit's Dragons by the unspoken agreement that keeps gang violence mostly off the settlement's streets. He has to be helped along as his untreated leg wound is too severe for him to walk unaided. A Challenging (+0) Medicae Test bandages, splints, and dresses his wound enough for him to walk on his own. If the Acolytes cannot treat him then he must be carried back. This requires a Challenging (+0) Strength Test, failure causes the Acolyte to suffer a level of Fatigue.

Breshk



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
26	34	31	28	37	29	32	22	33

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 10

Skills: Awareness +10, Blather, Deceive, Dodge, Intimidate, Scrutiny, Search, Speak Language (Low Gothic).

Talents: Unremarkable.

Armour: Gang Leathers (2 All but Head).

Weapons: Modified Hunting Rifle (100m, S/-/-, 1d10+5 I, Pen 2, Clip 3, Reload Full, Unreliable).

BEFRIENDING BRESHK

If the Acolytes take Breshk with them, trouble follows him. On the hills of smouldering lava crust just outside the town, a group of four Skarit's Dragons gangers are monitoring the side of the road. They are survivors of the skirmish and are laden down with Common-quality shotguns and stub revolvers, common in Gunmetal City's Infernis. They wear the piecemeal home-made plate armour typical of their gang.

Voices along the road side begin to shout back and forth from cover in what appears to be a series of references and coded phrases. A moment later a large man with dirty soot-stained skins stands from behind an outcropping of debris. His clothing is covered in pieces of scavenged metal plating. Through his crooked teeth he shouts, "You don't have to give us the Cadaver you got there, but you don't have to leave neither."

Acolytes can give them Breshk, in which case the Skarit's Dragons lead him off into the underhive wastes, presumably to kill him. If the Acolytes refuse, the Skarit's Dragons open fire on the Acolytes and Breshk. The gangers have taken positions about 25 metres from the road behind cover that obscures their lower half and provides an additional 10 armour to their legs if standing, and their legs and chest if kneeling. Once two of the four have been killed or taken out, the other two attempt to flee. If the Acolytes pursue they can catch up with the Skarit's Dragons with a Challenging (+0) Agility Test, and if caught the remaining Skarit's Dragons fight to the death. The Skarit's Dragons can be found on page 47.

If the Acolytes do not bring Breshk with them, they reach Blinding Gulch without further incident.

WELCOME TO BLINDING GULCH

After dealing with the fallout from gang violence at The Skirmish Site, the Acolytes arrive at Blinding Gulch.

The settlement is a small, dusty, ramshackle place clustered into a depression in the surrounding rock formations. Strings of lanterns provide a ruddy, wavering light where the shacks and wooden buildings cast shadows from the light of the Hive Fall. A main street of multi-storied buildings gives way to stretches of cramped shanty-town alleys. A short distance from the town is the multi-coloured lake fed by the Hive Fall of oily gunk and debris. On the other side of town is a mighty river of lava, always growing slightly dimmer until midnight, when it is replenished and glows bright enough to illuminate the entire underhive in a white-hot incandescence.

If the Acolytes brought Breshk back to Blinding Gulch he thanks them, promises to repay them one day if he can, and hobbles into town.

"I can't thank you enough. Just leave me here and my brothers will come collect me. I don't know what brought you to this place, but if you want my advice, steer clear of the Pain Pit. If you're just passing through, just keep on passing. If your here looking for something, well... you might ponder a visit to the Spent Shell. You might get the warmest reception there. Now move on, the others won't come get me if they see outsiders lurking about."

Blinding Gulch has a population of several thousand, most of them underhivers living in the shanties or the remains of buildings scattered among the lava wastes surrounding the settlement. The main street has two gathering areas which double as makeshift taverns known as the Call to Arms and the Spent Shell. A general store with expired rations and found debris for sale is run by a woman named Kayala who also knows a thing or two about repairing guns. Closest to the Hive Fall is a gambling den and fighting arena called the Pain Pit. Not too far from this hall of brutality is, appropriately, the local medic, Doc Weston. The inhabitants are dressed in the battered work clothes and rags typical to the Infernis, but many of them make an effort with regards to appearances, like wearing garish coloured ash make-up or brightly-coloured sashes so they stand out a little. Others are work-weary and grimy, walking back from the Hive Falls with bags or buckets of oil-covered junk. People in large, heat-resistant bodygloves can be seen, just returning from a harvest of the lava shores. A couple of Skarit's Dragons hang around rolling dice in a doorway, watching over the comings and goings, while a gaggle of the Cadavers are hanging around outside the Pain Pit. The sounds of raised voices, clinking glasses, and drunken singing come from the Call to Arms and Spent Shell.

FIRST CONTACTS

Shortly after the Acolytes arrive in Blinding Gulch, both the Skarit's Dragons and the Cadavers contact them offering employment in the coming battle to decide who rules the settlement.

SUNDERBONE'S OFFER

Lord Sunderbone himself will want to speak with the Acolytes. Sunderbone wears more ornate and less tarnished armour than the two gangers who accompany him and he is armed with a hunting rifle in better condition than most of the settlement's guns. If the Acolytes killed the Skarit's Dragons patrol before arriving in the settlement, Sunderbone acknowledges this in making his offer.

"I take it you're the outsiders who cut down young Greeneye and his brothers? No matter. Greeneye had designs above his station. You have proven yourself and that's much more important than one more dead ruffian."

If the Acolytes didn't tangle with the Skarit's Dragons on the road, Lord Sunderbone launches right into his pitch.

"I have need of competent operators such as yourselves. In two days the matter of who commands Blinding Gulch will be settled by combat. Who can say why the Cadavers decided to opt for this most noble of contests, but whatever the reason the date is set. There will be a battle, and I intend to see that my Dragons will win it. Whatever it is that you came down here for, I will see that you have it if you fight on the right side when the time comes."

Sunderbone will readily agree to any demand the Acolytes make. Even if they ask for something outlandish he will agree, trusting that he can simply betray the Acolytes as soon as they have outlived their usefulness – a fact revealed by a Challenging (+0) Scrutiny Test. Reasonable demands are met with genuine agreement – specifically, Skarit agrees to give the Acolytes the name of someone who may know how to find the forger Venomskin in return for their aid in the battle, but only after the battle has been fought.

CADAVER'S BID

The second contact comes from the Cadavers. They are less open in playing their hand, and instead ensure that a message (scrawled on a wanted poster for their leader Gore) finds its way into the Acolytes' hands. This message might be pushed under their door if they take lodgings at the Spent Shell, appear tied to the leg of a ragged messenger-bird that alights near them, or simply appear in a pocket or among an Acolyte's equipment. This letter offers the Acolytes a meeting one hour after they receive the message. The Six-Fingered Hand is a rock formation near the settlement, a fact which everyone in the settlement knows, and they can easily direct the Acolytes to it.

At the Six-Fingered Hand one of Gore's underbosses, Molkun, meets with the Acolytes. He is covered in tattoos, scars and piercings and it is difficult to tell where his skin ends and his battered, studded-leather armour begins. If the Acolytes saved Breshk earlier, he expresses his gratitude.

"Brother Breshk was received alive. He will die, but on another day, and for this Gore sends his thanks. His gratitude is rare indeed. Gore thinks you are rare, too."

Regardless of Breshk's fate, Molkun has orders to make his own offer to the Acolytes.

"Soon night shall fall upon Blinding Gulch, and the Skarit's Dragons must not awake from it. There will be a reckoning. Much bloodshed. The night will be ruled by whoever puts their foe to the sword. Gore has decreed that the Dragons be met in open battle. Fight with us and you will have whatever it is within Gore's power to grant. Fight against us and Gore will have us labour long to devise a fate suitably painful. The choice is yours, but Gore keeps his promises. In two days' time shall we fight."

Molkun is similarly willing to agree to anything the Acolytes ask that is reasonable. This includes the location of Venomskin, but again this information will only be given after the battle. If the Acolytes make outlandish requests, Molkun agrees only to pass their demands on to Gore.

THE EVE OF BATTLE

The Acolytes may side with either gang in the Battle of Blinding Gulch. In the intervening two days they have the chance to investigate the gangs and perhaps learn a dark secret that will help inform their decision and even decide the outcome of the battle.

The Skarit's Dragons are worshippers of the Blood God, Khorne, and destroying their altar will cut off the source of Lord Sunderbone's great power. The Cadavers, meanwhile, serve an alien creature that demands hosts for its offspring, and its death will kill off the alien offspring used to turn host bodies into shock troops. Agreeing to serve one of the gangs will give a -1 to the Reputation Modifier of the group. The townsfolk do not like either of the gangs, but they like the constant warfare between them even less. If the intervention of the Acolytes will end the battle quicker, then the people will be happy. However, should it get out that they have agreed to help both gangs, the Modifier will raise by +1, instead, as the people of Blinding Gulch get the impression that the group brings nothing but trouble.

THE HAND THAT GUIDES...

Both gangs are being driven to war, albeit subtly, by Kris'an. Kris'an is an administratum Adeptus-novice with burgeoning ambition. She has arranged a deal with a Scintillan smelting consortium for rights to the resources of Blinding Gulch. All she has to do is clear out the town. To this end, Kris'an has been supplying weapons to both Skarit's Dragons and the Cadavers, hoping that the influx of arms would upset the balance of power and agitate both sides into conflict.

Meanwhile, she's also been selling arms to Kayala, hoping that access to arms would embolden the bravest townsfolk to join in the shooting when the inevitable conflict broke out, thus eliminating anyone who might fill the power vacuum left when both gangs are eliminated. With the town weakened so, it would take little effort for Kris'an to file a petition in Gunmetal City to sell off this portion of the underhive to her partners.

...IS, IN TURN, GUIDED.

Kris'an knows nothing about the abominable powers that control both gangs. She has, in fact, become quite corrupted by her dealings with Lord Sunderbone. Her plans for how to gain access to the town started off rather benign, with her main objective being a relocation of the townsfolk. Over time, however, the methodology Kris'an has chosen to employ has become quite bloody. She has a personal cogitator with all of her plans in the back room of the Spent Shell. Accessing the files is a Routine (+20) Ciphers (Administratum) Test or a Hard (-20) Tech-Use Test.



ASKING AROUND

The Acolytes can ask the general population of Blinding Gulch about Venomskin and other pertinent matters. This takes Inquiry Tests, and a couple of hours for each Test (Game Masters should take a note of how long the Acolytes spend making such Tests if time starts getting tight before the battle is fought). Ammunition is generally more well accepted than Thrones, and a few bullets can buy a lot of information. The Acolytes should not be making simple blind Inquiry Tests. As they discover secrets within Blinding Gulch they may have questions about the area and may want to perform Inquiry Tests such as the following:

BLINDING GULCH: EASY (+30) INQUIRY TEST

Blinding Gulch has been a stable settlement for many years, since the last gangs to battle over the place wiped each other out. But now the gangers are back fighting over the place. Most people believe they will wipe each other out too, then another set of gangs will move in, and the cycle will continue.

Rumours in Blinding Gulch include the arrival of the Hidden Sun Fair, a travelling fair that offers a few exotic entertainments in return for peoples' hard-earned ammunition. The Fair has set up on the outskirts of the Face, the settlement's district of shacks and shanties. No one trusts the itinerant entertainers, from the Fair and there are plenty who believe they're up to no good, but at least it's something different among the violence of the Infernis.

VENOMSKIN: DIFFICULT (-10) INQUIRY TEST

There was a forger named Venomskin who lived around Blinding Gulch a few years ago, although no one claims to have actually met him, and the only description of him is of a man with brightly coloured electoots all over his skin. Venomskin's precise location was unknown but he had a lair somewhere near. No one has heard anything of him for more than four years. The various gangs who came and went around Blinding Gulch all had an agreement to protect Venomskin's location from outsiders, like the Magistratum, who might come looking for him. Presumably Venomskin paid them for this, although no one is quite sure about that either.

THE GANGS: ORDINARY (+10) INQUIRY TEST

The Skarit's Dragons style themselves after a noble knightly order, although their actual methods are just as dirty and brutal as any other gangers. They like to wear armour, give themselves noble titles, and speak as if they were educated in the spire. Their leader is Lord Sunderbone, a tyrant who rules his men through violence and inspires great loyalty from those he permits into his inner circle. Lord Sunderbone is rarely seen around the settlement itself, probably fearing assassination attempts from the Cadavers. It is said that Lord Sunderbone wears magnificent red armour with dragons inscribed on it, supposedly a piece of ancient archeotech.

The Cadavers, meanwhile, are much more subtle and less openly warlike than the Dragons. Aside from a couple of members usually keeping tabs on things in the settlement they are rarely seen, using lightning raids and targeted attacks to keep the Dragons on their toes. It is widely assumed that they have an underground warren-like lair somewhere. Their leader is called Gore, although some speculate as to whether Gore even exists or is some bogeyman invented by the Cadavers. If Gore is real he's supposed to be a man of supreme intelligence and ruthlessness, who has a network of spies throughout the Infernis.

Both gangs have an unspoken agreement not to fight in the settlement itself, lest Blinding Gulch become a ghost town where no one is taking advantage of the resources brought in from the Hive Falls. Word is that this agreement will soon be broken, and that open war will come to the streets of the Gulch.

THE CRAWLER: CHALLENGING (+0) INQUIRY TEST

Everyone says the Crawler is the biggest underhive predator out there, but the truth is there probably is no Crawler at all. It's an old wives tale, told to scare disobedient children. There's always supposed to have been a Crawler out there, and other settlements have their own version of the Crawler's legend. But that's just what it is – a legend. So they say.

THE FERAL HUMANS: ORDINARY (+10) INQUIRY TEST

The ferals aren't just the usual subhuman raider types, although they do plenty of raiding. They're supposed to be the remains of some middle hiver community whose factory fell down from above. They all got trapped and ended up turning on one another. The survivors found a way out, but by then they had given up all semblance of civilisation, and they and their offspring live like animals off in the wastes.

Acolytes who make Inquiry Tests might also hear other random rumours, most of which are untrue but a few of which suggest the truth. These can be handed out as Game Masters wish as Acolytes question the inhabitants of Blinding Gulch. If the Acolytes ask around too much, however, people begin to grow wary of continuing to provide information, worrying that they are being set up by one of the gangs.

AREA 1: THE SPENT SHELL

This drinking den is small and close, and seems the quieter of the settlement's two such establishments. The patrons seem to be junk farmers, who swing by after a hard day's sifting through the Hive Falls to replace the fluids lost through toil with several pints of weak cloudy ale. A few elderly-looking men play a game involving the placing of wooden tiles in one corner, and the racking coughs of the most ill-looking patrons are louder than the conversation. Behind the bar works a portly stern-faced woman with red cheeks and forearms like sides of beef. A few heads turn at the sight of outsiders, but no one here seems to want any trouble.

The Acolytes can stay at lodgings upstairs at the Spent Shell for three Thrones a night (the landlady, Gert, demands payment in cash up front from obvious outsiders). This price gets each Acolyte a bunk and breakfast in the morning, which consists of a few slices of stringy grey meat cut from the carcass of a worm-like creature native to the underhive's volcanic vents. There is a small office, behind the bar, which Kris'an rents from Gert to use as a workspace. This office



contains her cogitator unit, which has logs of weapon sales to both gangs and Kayala, encrypted documents from Scintillan Smelting, and coordinates for the buried vehicle Venomskin uses as a hideout (though this location is not marked as such, it is marked on a map of the area, and seems significant).

One of the patrons, Ole Scurg, has useful information about the Skarit's Dragons. If the Acolytes ask Gert or the patrons in general about either of the gangs, Ole Scurg speaks up.

"Maybe I heard somethin'. But I also got me a problem. See, a man can't work 'round these here environs without a good iron in his hand. You ain't got no gun, you ain't got nothin' down here. Lost my Lil' Bessie down the throat of a lava spider near on two weeks ago. You got a piece for me, I'll tell you somethin' ain't no one else 'round here knows."

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In return for a gun (any gun, of any quality — as long as it has a chance of firing, Ole Scurg will accept it), Scurg will tell the Acolytes of a strange encounter he had.

"There's a hollow 'bout three hours hike north-west of this town. You'll know it by the rock spire above it, bent down and flarin' like a bird swoopin' down to strike. Below that spire you'll find the hollow, a secret little place I used to bed down in when the hive storms kept me from returnin' home of an eve. But last time I went there, some of them Skarit's Dragons boys was there already. I didn't hang around none, but they was doing some kind of ritual there. Maybe they was hazin' a new guy or just swappin' stories 'round the campfire, but I think they was up to no good in there, up to somethin' that ain't right. I ain't been up there since. Best I know, no one has. I'm just sayin', someone should check it out. Just sayin'."

AREA 2: THE CALL TO ARMS

Raucous drinking, fighting, and singing fill this drinking hole. The air is hot and reeks of sweat and alcohol. The snatches of the songs you catch among the din are universally obscene. Most of the drinkers are Hive Falls farmers and assorted toughs and low-lives, but several members of the Skarit's Dragons are holding a drinking competition by the bar. Behind the bar are several stills making various evil-looking alcoholic concoctions, served by a pair of heavily scarred men who look like veterans of the underhive's violent ways.

The patrons and staff of the Call to Arms have little love for outsiders and treat the Acolytes with bluntness and muttered scorn. The two bartenders/bouncers, Brengerrin and his cousin Decker, will serve the Acolytes extremely strong alcohol but don't want to have anything else to do with them. The extreme strength and toxic impurities of the drinks at the Call

to Arms means any Acolyte taking a drink here must make an Ordinary (+10) Carouse Test or gain one level of Fatigue.

The four members of the Skarit's Dragons are willing to let the Acolytes join their drinking competition. Each of the Skarit's Dragons and the competing Acolytes make a Carouse Test, with the Skarit's Dragons using their Toughness of 35 (they all have the Carouse Skill so they use their full Toughness). Any competitor who fails either collapses, vomits or otherwise disgraces themselves and is out of the competition. Competitors who are out at this stage also gain one level of Fatigue from their indulgences. If no competitors remain, the contest is scratched and no one wins. If only one remains, he is declared the winner. If multiple competitors remain, they each drink a second round and make opposed Carouse Tests to determine the winner.

If one of the Skarit's Dragons wins, the Acolytes are laughed at and mocked by the assembled drinkers. If an Acolyte wins, however, they have gained a measure of grudging respect from the people of Blinding Gulch, who are happy to see the arrogant Skarit's Dragons put in their place for once. The Acolytes gain a -3 to their Reputation Modifier.



AREA 3: THE PAIN PIT

Wooden tables surround a large pit, between one and two metres deep, that dominates this large room. The air is heavy with narcotic haze from the hookahs smoked by many of the gamblers playing dice or card games at the tables. The bottom of the pit is covered with blood-stained sand, and a covered corridor leads from the back of the premises into the pit itself. Several patrons are gathered around the pit in anticipation, swapping wagers or arguing the odds. A few employees, marked out by the white sashes they wear, take money and hand out scribbled betting slips. Somewhere a bell is rung and two pit fighters are herded out into the pit. The first is a squat, muscular man armed with twin spiked gauntlets. The crowd whoops when they see that the second competitor is a woman, with less armour than her opponent but a long spear to fight with.

"Ah, my new friends!" says a portly man in a white sash, grinning as he sees you walk in. "Care to place a wager? Very good prices tonight! Very good prices! I'll give you evens on this one! Cash or kind, don't be shy!"

The Pain Pit is an ideal location for Acolytes to hang out making Inquiry Tests and indulge in games of chance. The most popular activity here is wagering money or goods (especially guns and ammunition) on the outcomes of pit fights. The fight about to begin is between crowd favourite Kellin Dan (the woman) and local boy Mox (the man). Acolytes can put money or ammunition on the fight before it begins.

The fight is short and brutal. Kellin stabs Mox through the thigh and the crowd bays for his blood. Mox, however, rips the weapon out of Kellin's hand and punches her in the jaw hard enough to break it. Kellin sprawls to the sand and Mox pulls the spear out of his thigh and holds it at Kellin's throat.

The crowd now cries out for him to kill her, and unless the Acolytes intervene (which takes an Ordinary (+10) Charm or Intimidate Test), he does so. When the fight is done with, the competitors return to the back rooms of the Pain Pit (or, in Kellin's case, are dragged out by a couple of staffers) and the winnings are doled out. If the Acolytes put money or ammunition on Mox, they receive double their stake back.

THE WITNESS

One of the staffers here, Dreyvan, is on the lookout for someone who is in Blinding Gulch on business that goes beyond sifting through the Hive Falls for junk. He has seen something that he can't explain that worries him greatly, and he doesn't trust anyone in the Gulch in case they're in on it. He approaches the Acolytes in the hope they can help find out what is going on.

"Hey. You ain't local, right? Good. Good. I guess you ain't here just to lose all your bullets in this dive, right? You wanna see something weird? Really weird?"

If the Acolytes agree that they would like to see something weird, Dreyvan leads them into one of the back rooms. These

cramped, grubby rooms are used for storage or patching up wounded fighters. In one of them, on a table, lies the recently dead body of a human dressed in nothing but a ragged loincloth, covered in scars and ground-in grime. It is a man, with unkempt hair that looks like it has never been cut. The cause of death was evidently the ugly bite wound in the throat. The body has been opened up after death, a long cut running down its chest and abdomen.

"This here's one of them ferals the lads captured. We stuck it in the pit against a couple of sump hounds and they killed 'im. See? They got 'is throat. Thing was, I... well, I was pursuin' my hobby here, and I found somethin' in 'im I can't rightly explain."

Dreyvan then reaches into the long wound in the feral's abdomen and takes out a horrible creature resembling a cross between an oversized worm and a crustacean, about the length of a human arm and covered in chitinous limbs. One end terminates in a round, lamprey-like mouth, and a row of composite eyes runs along its spine. The creature is dead, thankfully, but that does not make it any less horrible.

"It was coiled round 'is spine. Now, what you think of that? Ain't seen anythin' like it. Makes you wonder how many of them ferals have one in 'em. And there's one other thing. Check this out."

Dreyvan puts the alien parasite down and lifts the body up, showing a brand almost lost among the body's countless old scars. The brand reads Genatorium Epsilon Thirteen.

"Word is, there's a knot of 'em lurkin' up around the east shore of the Falls. Lot of the farmers want 'em out, but no one's got the sand to mess with 'em. I'd go up there myself to see what they're up to, if any more have these things in 'em, but... well, you see how I got my hands full here."

AREA 4: DOC WESTON'S

This surprisingly clean one room building is home to a table just large enough for a man to lay down on and a series of surgical and medical tools on a tray, bathing in green fluid. Many of the implements are clearly those of an Imperial Guardsman with training as a medic. An aging medic's side bag rests in the corner as proof.

Doc Weston was a Medic with the 83rd Scintillan Grenadiers, where he received the best training the Imperial Guard has to offer fighting in the Tranch Wars. When his term of service was up, he returned to his home hive of Gunmetal City. A year later, vindictive members of the noble houses made it nearly impossible for him to find paying patients after he gave a middle-hiver a life saving treatment normally reserved for nobility. Soon after, Weston relocated to Blinding Gulch, where he could practice without the pressures of the nobles above. Now, he'll treat anyone who can pay him enough to buy more black market pharmicae from Kris'an. The final price is up to the GM, but should be low for the rank of the Acolytes.

Weston keeps a hellpistol in his desk, his sidearm from his time in the Guard. His office contains enough equipment to treat even the most severe wounds. The townsfolk all consider the Doc to be a blessing, and even the gangers leave him alone as long as he gives them treatment for their injuries.

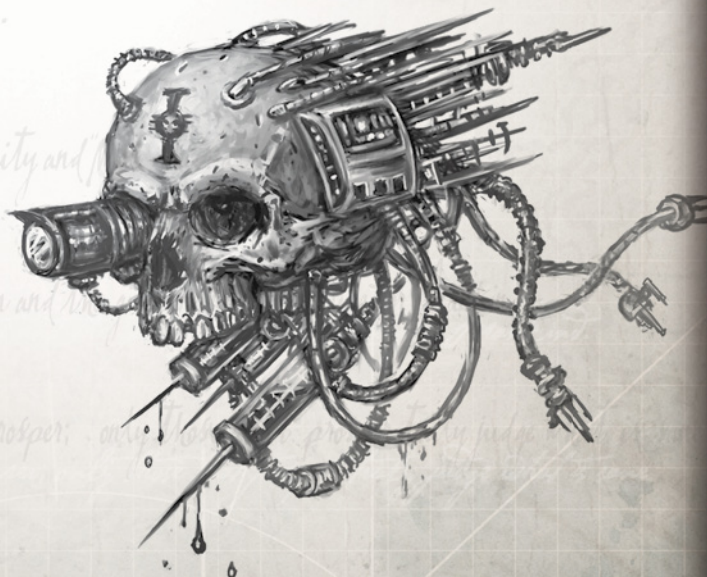
AREA 5: KAYALA'S GUNS

Inside this metal shack is a workshop with thousands of gun components scattered across its workbenches. Sitting at one of the benches is a woman wearing a heavy leather apron and goggles, turning a rifle barrel on a lathe. On the walls are racked dozens of complete guns, all of them simple solid projectile weapons that have seen better days.

The woman scowls at the interruption. "What do you want?" she demands.

Kayala is Blinding Gulch's gunsmith, and makes a passable living (by Infernis standards) refurbishing and salvaging guns and making ammunition. She receives a great deal of her stock from Kris'an, an Adept with the Administratum who recognizes that she can make a decent profit from selling rejected weapons from the warehouses above to a town on the verge of internal warfare. Acolytes can buy ammunition for solid projectile weapons here, along with power packs for lasguns and laspistols. Kayala only has autoguns, autopistols, and stub pistols for sale in her workshop, all of Poor workmanship.

Kayala has a stash of better gear that she sells to favoured customers. An Ordinary (+10) Charm Test gets on Kayala's good side. She slides a false wall aside to reveal her better merchandise: a heavy stubber, a long las, a grenade launcher, and four frag grenades. These items are of Good craftsmanship. She will sell these either for raw Thrones or for an equal value of gear, guns, or ammunition, and Acolytes can haggle her down with the Barter Skill.



AREA 6: THE HOLLOW

A forest of rocky spires conceals a clearing where the ground is smooth, glassy, cooled lava, contained by the spires that meet overhead. They give the appearance of a deliberately created sanctum hidden in the wastes. A patch of scorched debris suggests a recent fire, and at the far side of the hollow lies the familiar sagging shape of a human body.

Something hisses in the darkness between the spires, the sound echoes from the other side of the clearing. Creatures like oversized skinless rats, their exposed muscles wet and oozing, leap chittering from hiding, chittering at your approach, slathering foul ropes of drool in anticipation of a feast. One of their number has a cranium swollen to grotesque proportions, pinkish-grey brain matter bulging from cracks in its skull.

Sump Hounds



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
31	0	41	27	29	06	21	22	06

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 9

Skills: Awareness, Intimidate, Tracking +10.

Talents: Heightened Senses (Smell), Sprint

Traits: Bestial, Natural Weapon (Bite), Quadraped

Armour: None.

Weapons: Bite (1d10+4 R, Pen 3), Cranium Hound has Toxic Maw (1d10+6 R, Pen 4, Toxic)

The four sump hounds and their cranium hound pack leader are frenzied with hunger. If the cranium hound is killed and only one or two hounds are left, the survivors flee. Otherwise they fight to the death.

The body looks, from its piecemeal plate armour, to be that of a Skarit's Dragons member, relatively young but with plenty of scars suggesting a violent life. He has been killed by dozens of stab wounds to the abdomen, far in excess of what would be required to kill him. On the body is a flintlock pistol and, unlike the poorly maintained guns of most gangers, it looks like an antique that has been well cared for, with a grip inscribed with filigree and a finely machined barrel and mechanism. The body does not have any powder or shot on it, so it seems the gun was carried as a keepsake or good luck charm rather than a weapon. On the gun butt are inscribed the words "To Khol, With Pride, Your Father." An Ordinary (+10) Inquiry Test yields the information that Khol was a ganger born in Blinding Gulch, whose family still lives in a shack with a distinctive yellow-painted corrugated iron roof.

A Challenging (+0) Search Test of the hollow turns up a palm-sized iron icon shaped like a horned bull's head in a circle. It looks like it was worn as a pendant. An Easy (+30) Psyniscience Test detects an aura of extreme anger and bloodlust emanating from the icon, along with the psychic stench of fresh blood.

AREA 7: THE HIVE FALLS

Were it not for the fact that the Hive Falls is a deluge of sewage and junk, it might be beautiful. Its multi-coloured torrent plunges into a greasy lake with a rainbow sheen playing across its surface, islands of detritus circling in the current. Several shelters and makeshift pontoons ring the edge of the lake closest to the town, and a few farmers are fishing for junk or panning for useful debris. They wear heavy protective clothing of salvaged rubber or leather to protect from the chemicals that cause the air around the lake to turn oily and choking.

The farmers are not very numerous at the moment, as they have adopted the habit of farming the lake all at once at appointed times. This is to make them less susceptible to the attacks of the ferals, who are thought to be lurking nearby with the intent of killing and eating isolated farmers. The farmers brave enough to work the lake in less busy times can tell the Acolytes this, along with various beliefs that the rumours about the ferals aren't true, that no feral could possibly mess with a tough Blinding Gulch farmer type, or that the ferals aren't aggressive and should just be left alone.



An Easy (+30) Tracking Test or Challenging (+0) Awareness or Survival Test identifies the tracks of a group of shoeless humans leading off through a ravine. Acolytes following these tracks find a group of six feral humans scrapping over the carcass of a sump hound they have just killed.

Acolytes can choose to remain out of sight, which requires each Acolyte present to make a Routine (+20) Concealment Test – if half or more of the Acolytes pass this Test, they stay hidden from the ferals. If the ferals see the Acolytes, they all flee. If not, they finish squabbling and drag their carcass with them down the ravine. The Acolytes can now follow the ferals for about an hour's walk, which brings them within sight of the Genatorium. If the ferals flee, the Acolytes can follow their tracks to the Genatorium with an Easy (+30) Tracking Test, or a Challenging (+0) Awareness or Survival Test.

AREA 8: GENATORIUM EPSILON THIRTEEN

Ahead is the bizarre sight of a whole building apparently fallen down from the hive layers above. An ugly industrial mass of a building, its blocky shape broken up by the turbine cylinders emerging from its roof, has collapsed through a hole in the ceiling of this layer and landed unevenly in a field of cooled lava. It sits at an angle, like a listing ship, and its walls are crumpled and dented from the impact. It looks like it has been down here a long time. Amid the rust and the dirt, the words 'Genatorium Epsilon Thirteen' are still visible above the main doors.

The Genatorium has indeed fallen down here from above – all the way from the middle hive layers of Gunmetal City, in fact. It is inhabited by the feral humans descended from the hive workers who survived the collapse generations ago, and has recently been used by the Cadavers to test alien parasites on the ferals. That experiment did not end well, and the gruesome results still lie here for the Acolytes to find.

THE ENTRANCEWAY

The Acolytes can enter through the main doors, but ample footprints and debris around the doors show they are well used by the ferals. A Routine (+20) Awareness Test lets an Acolyte notice an entrance higher up, which can be accessed by a rickety ladder and gantry on the side of the building. If the Acolytes enter through the main doors, they are confronted by the ferals inside, including their alpha female.

A group of ragged humans, dressed in what looks like the tattered remains of industrial overalls, turns to you as you approach. They are filthy, malnourished, hunched creatures that are human only in the broadest sense of the word. One of them, a hugely oversized female, bellows a wordless order to the other ferals and they snatch up bone clubs and other improvised weapons.

This is the front room of the Genatorium, which contains lockers for indentured workers' belongings (long since ransacked), a set of decontamination showers which no longer work, and the remains of the administrator's office. It is used as a living space by the group of ferals including the alpha female. Combat with the ferals is difficult to avoid. They have been mistreated horribly by the Cadavers and are terrified of outsiders. The Feral Alpha is accompanied by two Feral Underhivers for each Acolyte. If the Feral Alpha dies the other Feral Underhivers will flee when half have been killed. If the Feral Alpha is alive they will fight to the death.

Feral Alpha



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
45	13	42	44	32	21	22	12	19

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 12

Skills: Awareness, Dodge, Intimidate, Search.

Talents: Crushing Blow.

Armour: None.

Weapons: Wicked Club (1d10+6 R, Pen 3, Primitive).

Feral Underhivers



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
32	12	36	38	34	17	28	19	16

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 7

Skills: Awareness, Intimidate, Search.

Talents: Double Team.

Armour: None.

Weapons: Makeshift Clubs (1d10+3 I, Pen 0, Primitive).

THE TURBINE ROOM

The only room accessible through the Entranceway is the Turbine Room, through a dilapidated blast door along the uphill slant of the building.

The main turbine hall is dominated by the four enormous turbine cylinders which stand on end and reach up out of the roof. The floor between the turbines is divided into pens by makeshift fences and barricades. The fences are taller than head height, but many have been torn down. Bodies of ferals are strewn around the pens, many draped over the fences where they apparently died trying to climb over. Dried blood is everywhere, spattered across the floor and up against the turbines.

This is where the Cadavers kept the ferals they captured when they took over the Genatorium. They performed experiments on the ferals but they underestimated the ferals' capacity to work together and the ferals rose up, killing some of the Cadavers posted there to perform the experiments. The Cadavers massacred the ferals and abandoned the Genatorium. The bodies here, all ferals, have been here for some time but it is obvious they were killed by gunshot wounds. Acolytes who decide to check out the bodies thoroughly find that

several have surgical scars on their abdomens, suggesting recent operations. If they open up these bodies they find dead parasites similar to the one shown to them by Dreyvan.

A double doorway leading to a room at the back of the Genatorium was reinforced with crude bars and locks, but one door has been torn off its hinges. This room was set up as a crude surgical theatre, with a metal bench set up as an operating table with channels cut into it to drain off blood. A large sealed barrel stands in one corner, and lockers are arranged against one wall. Old bloodstains cover the floor. In one of the lockers is stuffed the body of a Cadavers ganger, still wearing bloodstained industrial rubber gloves and a crude filter mask. While he has also been here a while, his crushed skull suggests that he was clubbed to death with something heavy and blunt. This body still has barely legible orders on him from the Cadavers' leader, Gore, which contains directions that may lead the Acolytes to the crew's hidden lair in the wastes outside Blinding Gulch.

In the sealed barrel are three alien parasites, still alive, swimming in a nutrient-rich, viscous fluid. These parasites are not dangerous to the Acolytes, and only pose a threat when implanted into a host. Having live specimens allows the Acolytes to examine them. An Ordinary (+10) Forbidden Knowledge (Xenos) Test reveals that the parasites are unlikely to have evolved naturally and were probably bred to be suitable for human hosts. Their injecting mouthparts and associated glands are similar to those in xenos which excrete behaviour-altering substances into their hosts and cause the host to exhibit behaviour beneficial to the parasite. This exact species has not been recorded before, but is likely descended from the kind of parasitic creatures frequently found on jungle Death worlds.



AREA 9: THE FACE

The homes of Blinding Gulch's population are all built from recovered material – blocks of building stone, sheet metal, wooden boards, plastic tarpaulins, and thousands of such shacks and hovels cluster around the sides of the gulch and the rock formations within it. The Face is a busy place, with farmers trudging to and from the Hive Falls, gossip sessions and arguments in the street, and fungus loaf or sump cattle meat cooking in communal fire pits.

The Face is the home of Khol's family, and can easily be found given its roof of yellow corrugated iron. In this home lives Khol's father and mother and his three sisters. His mother is a Hive Falls farmer, a sturdy woman with a face tanned and lined by exposure to the lake's chemicals. His father has only one arm, and his hand has only three fingers remaining, thanks to a razors shark attack while farming in his youth. Khol's sisters are almost nondescript, waiting meekly and silently at the back of the shack, staring at the floor, while in the presence of strangers.

Khol's parents react with sadness but not surprise at Khol's death. He was a good boy but they knew they had lost him when he joined the Skarit's Dragons. The Dragons promise to make recruits into soldiers and give them a slice of the riches sure to flow when they take over Blinding Gulch, but the truth is most of them are just disposable fodder for use in the fight with the Cadavers. Khol returned to the family rarely after joining the Skarit's Dragons, and each time he seemed further and further from the lad they knew.

The Acolytes can take a look at Khol's belongings with a Routine (+20) Charm Test. This Test automatically succeeds if the Acolytes return Khol's flintlock to his father, who thanks them profusely – it belonged to the family when they were still middle hivers, before economic upheaval banished them to the Infernis, and Khol's father inscribed it in the futile hope that it would bring his son luck. Among Khol's belongings, which include little more than a handful of ammunition and a few clothes, is a diary which records his excitement at the forthcoming gang ceremony where he believed he would reach the rank of a full ganger – he notes a rumour he heard that he will even meet the Crawler, the spirit of the Infernis itself, and that the Crawler's lair is actually halfway between the Mourning Arch and Ole Dev's Stand.

The inhabitants of Blinding Gulch can tell the Acolytes where these landmarks are. The Mourning Arch is a natural arch of rock where criminals are hung – it still has a few lengths of frayed rope tied to its span and a couple of old bones on the stony ground beneath. Ole Dev's Stand is a cave where a hermit supposedly once lived, although there is no sign of him now. Halfway between the two is indeed the Crawler's lair, one of many such caves opened up by eruptions of lava in the underhive's past.

AREA 10: THE HIDDEN SUN FAIR

Just beyond the straggles of shanties that make up the Face, an encampment surrounded by a laager of wagons stands festooned with flags and coloured lights. A banner over the entrance shows the symbol of a white ring on a black field, perhaps representing an eclipse. The place is bustling with workers in exotic clothes setting up or striking booths and tents, and a few Blinding Gulch inhabitants are wandering, staring at the strange clothes of the outsiders and the bright decorations of the various attractions. The air is full of the smell of cooking meat from the booths selling food and drink, tinged with strange spices. A boxing ring surrounded by wooden benches has been set up, and a few spectators are sitting waiting for the next bout. A set of linked tents is hung with a sign promising 'Wonders and Horrors Beyond Belief'. The wagons are painted brightly, with one in particular flanked by a pair of burly minders, guarding a short stairway leading up to a door hung with bunches of herbs and strange flowers.

The Hidden Sun Fair has been in town a couple of days and is soon to leave. Though the locals mistrust the travelling entertainers, many of them cannot resist the promise of exoticism that breaks up the grimness of life in the Infernis. Acolytes can themselves savour the entertainments here, and perhaps learn something of potential importance about the future.

THE RING

The boxing ring is used for exhibition contests by Rali, the carnival's strongman and brawling professional. Rali was once a championship brawler in the Fensworld underground fighting circuit. If the Acolytes approach the ring, Rali recognises potential customers. Rali is a tall, burly, shaven-headed and bearded man whose barrel-chested shape is covered in old scars and murky tattoos. He jumps over the ropes and begins his patter to the audience.

"All-comers, ladies and gentlemen and everything in between, how tough do you think you really are? Test yourselves against Rali the Stone-Handed, the master of the fighting arts! Best me and go home a little richer! Try your luck, ladies and gentlemen! Risk a few bullets and take me on! How will you ever know yourself without testing yourself against the best?"

Rali will fight anyone for a fee of three bullets. If they defeat him, they win back nine bullets. If he beats them, they lose their stake. Rali is a proud man and adheres to an unwritten code that sideshow fighters must face anyone who walks through the gates, no matter how huge and dangerous they look. The only exceptions are that Rali will not accept as an opponent anyone with obvious bionic limbs or other mechanical enhancements, and will not fight mutants. Acolytes fighting Rali must do so without any weapons or armour, stripped to the waist. Rali and his opponents fight bareknuckle. A fight lasts three rounds of three minutes, as

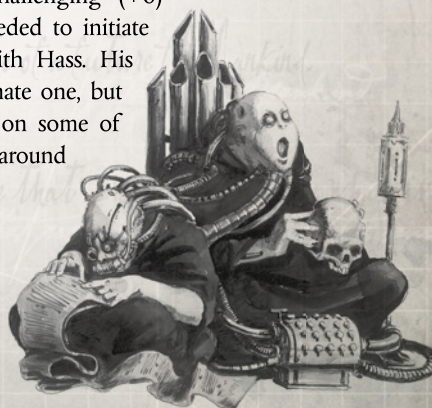
kept by a pretty and scantily-clad timekeeper. An Acolyte fighting Rali must make an opposed Weapon Skill Test against Rali's Weapon Skill of 50. The winner of this Opposed Test wins the round. After each round the Acolyte must make a Challenging (+0) Toughness Test or suffer -10 to Weapon Skill Tests for the rest of the match as they tire. The first to win two rounds out of three wins the bout. If the Acolyte loses, Rali slaps them heartily on the back and encourages the audience (which grows as soon as a fight begins) to cheer the plucky loser. Rali whispers to them that they can visit Doc Weston, should any of their injuries be too painful. If the Acolyte wins, Rali picks himself up off the canvas, holds the winner's hand in the air and proclaims them the first to have ever beaten Rali the Stone-Handed in honest combat. He then takes the winner aside and offers them their nine bullets as winnings. In addition, word of the Acolytes physical prowess spreads; the Acolytes gain -3 to their Reputation modifier.

THE MAIN TENT

The large tent promising 'Wonders and Horrors Beyond Belief' is manned by a pair of fair workers who take a fee of one bullet for entry. Inside is a freak show consisting of four mutants, all displayed on pedestals lit moodily by oil lamps. A few customers are always in here, whispering nervously and pointing at the mutants, who for their part simply sit detached, ignoring the laughter and insults that are occasionally thrown their way.

One mutant has four arms, and sits shirtless, turning the pages of a book with one pair and dealing out cards with the other. The second mutant possesses an impossibly skinny form, with a skeletal face and ribs showing, a partially torn and baggy shirt hanging off his stick-like frame. The third has three heads, two of them dead and vestigial, arranged asymmetrically around his deformed bulky shoulders. The fourth mutant is the most badly deformed. He has one arm vastly oversized, useless and club-like, and one eye is a bloated, white, blind orb that bulges from his face. He has what appears to be a conjoined creature attached to the side of his chest, resembling a fanged snake or lizard, coiled up and held in place by a cradle of scar tissue.

Acolytes who have already seen the parasite shown to them by Dreyvan in the Pain Pit will recognise the similarity of that creature to the one attached to this mutant. The mutant is named Hass, and he is unwilling to speak with customers since doing so is thought of as highly unprofessional amongst the freaks. A Challenging (+0) Charm Test is needed to initiate a conversation with Hass. His tale is an unfortunate one, but it can shed light on some of the happenings around Blinding Gulch.



"Was a time I lived here, but no one'll recognise me now. Went out a-working the Falls one day, like every day afore that. Only this time I was taken. Didn't much see who it was but I reckon it was one of them Cadaver boys. Can't be sure, now, but that's what I think from the little I saw of 'em. When I awoke, I was alone in a room like a little cell, somewhere under the ground, and this here new companion were hanging out o' a tear in my chest, like he'd been a-shoved in there while I was out. Well, I was sore afraid and hurtin' bad, but there weren't no one there to guard me. So I upped and ran out of there and hid out in the wastes. Can't say where it was now, though, 'cause I'd say I was delirious. The changes came over me, my eye and my arm, and things inside me that still give me pain. Wanderers came across me, don't know who, and they sold me to the Hidden Sun Fair. 'Bout as good an outcome as I could hope for, I guess, but darned if I don't hate them Cadaver boys for what they done to me. If it really was them, o'course."

THE CARAVAN

This highly decorated caravan belongs to Skirl the Ancient, the Hidden Sun Fair's fortune teller. Skirl is treated with reverence by the other members of the fair, who believe that unlike most such fortune tellers and snake oil salesmen (who are all charlatans), Skirl is the real thing. Asking fair workers about the caravan will elicit stern warnings not to cross Skirl and to treat her with respect, otherwise the Evil Eye is sure to follow. Members of the public can go to Skirl for a reading, but they'd better be sure they're ready to hear something they don't want to know.

Skirl's caravan is a small, dimly lit place covered in cushions and pots of growing herbs, where Skirl herself sits at a small round table lit by a single candle. Skirl is an extremely old woman, wizened and shrunken by the years, her skin dark and tanned by decades of the Infernis' harsh environment. It is impossible to guess at her real age. She only permits one customer in her caravan at a time, no exceptions. A Challenging (+0) Psyniscience Test suggests that Skirl is indeed a psyker, although she is not very powerful or focused, indicating an untrained mind.

Skirl demands as payment not ammunition, but a single item of emotional significance. The Games Master is the judge of what items Skirl accepts. Examples might include lucky charms, trophies taken from slain foes, pictures of family or loved ones, mementoes of past careers or investigations, and so forth. Once she is paid, she sits back, takes the customer's hands, and closes her eyes for a long, rather uncomfortable minute. Then, in a low murmuring voice, she tells them what she sees.

Skirl is a low-level psyker who does indeed possess a vague but genuine precognitive ability. To the Acolytes, she can offer visions of events later in their investigation. The visions she might describe include:

"I see... I see the cold of the void! And two ships locked in conflict, a deadly dance... there is much death and violence aboard. I see you. You are in grave danger, but... yes, I see you fighting back! A hungry world wants to drag you in and consume you, but you fight back..."

"A temple with the walls covered in severed hands. Faces screaming silently. A holy place defiled. There is a light, but it is dying. It will be snuffed out, and become something terrible. And into this horror, you will walk."

"The halls of the holy are aflame. A soaring magnificence is a war zone. Devastation. Panic. But into this you must dive, weapons in hand, for here it is that the darkness you face lurks, and where it will be excised."

"I see... O, foul! A man without skin. His evil is open for all the galaxy to see. But he is not alone. He has drawn allies from the darkest of places. When you face him, you will face all those he brings with him, too."

"I see the resting place of three heroes, the hand of purity, a torrent of shocking visions, a severed finger and a tongue aflame. These trials will vex thee mightily, and through them you shall find the sum of all wickedness."

"The illustrated man waits for you. You will find him, but you will not find what you expected. And do not lower your guard. His enemy is your enemy."

"I can tell you only this. Do not look into the well."

Skirl is exhausted by this task and must rest, refusing to read anyone else's fortune. If the Acolytes persist, or threaten her, she will attempt to read another fortune but lose consciousness as she does so.



AREA 11: THE CRAWLER'S LAIR

Through the sulphurous fog rolling from the cave in front of you, you can see only darkness. A low grinding sound, like a distant roar or earthquake, shudders the ground beneath you. The shape of a vast worm emerges from the shadows, a single long articulated mandible extending from its glistening, fleshy lips. Eye-stalks turn towards you as it slides out of the cave, revealing its truly titanic size. The ground shakes once more, violently, as it roars, and you can see all the way down its throat to the acidic mire of its stomach.

The Crawler, fearsome though it is, is not real. It is an illusion generated by an archeotech device to protect the chapel inside the cave, and though the device is responsible for the rumours of the Crawler it has no power to actually kill anyone. Acolytes may make Challenging (+0) Awareness Tests to realise that, though the Crawler looks and sounds real, the appalling stench one would expect from such a creature is absent, and the way light plays on the creature's hide does not seem quite right. Acolytes who try to fight the Crawler find that bullets and blades go straight through it, and that its mandible similarly passes right through them when it attacks.

The illusion of the Crawler only reaches a short distance into the cave. Once inside, the Acolytes can see the vox-hailers set up around the entrance to project the sound of the Crawler's roars, along with the holo-servitor in the middle of the cave projecting the image. This servitor consists of a human body doubled over, with the holo-projector's arrangement of lenses and lights emerging from the small of its back. The rest of the body is bound into position by steel braces and the back of the skull is covered in switches and controls. An Easy (+30) Tech-Use Test allows an Acolyte to switch the servitor on and off, although the only illusion it can currently project is of the Crawler. At the back of the cave is a shrine to Khorne, the Blood God. The back of the cave is not lit and Acolytes must either bring their own light source or be capable of seeing in the dark.

The shrine is dominated by a bronze statue of a bull-headed, humanoid creature with bat-like wings and an axe in its hands. In front of it is a stone block used as an altar, with manacles at either end, covered in score marks and old bloodstains from countless sacrifices. Severed arms are nailed to the walls by the dozen, in various states of decay. From the ceiling hang skulls, suspended by spiked chains. A heap of ammunition, bloodied knives, and severed hands and ears sits oozing before the altar, offerings to the shrine's patron god. An armour stand holds a suit of blood-red plate armour, positioned at the back of the shrine as if its blank eye slits were watching over it. This is nothing less than a shrine to violent death, a celebration of violence for its own sake.

Acolytes with any experience battling the Dark Gods should recognise this as a shrine to Khorne. The bull-headed statue echoes the symbol on the icon the Acolytes might have found in the Hollow. The armour on the stand is the Panoply of Lord

Sunderbone, kept here to absorb the dark influence of the Warp and worn by the leader of the Skarit's Dragons in battle. Its finely wrought plates are inscribed with images of winding dragons soaring over plains heaped high with skulls. The Panoply of Lord Sunderbone is a powerful artefact, but wearing it has inevitable consequences for the soul of the wearer.

The existence of the shrine is proof that the Skarit's Dragons are worshippers of Khorne. Destroying the shrine cuts off the source of power that Lord Sunderbone hopes will seal his victory in the battle for Blinding Gulch. The shrine can be destroyed by pulling down the statue and dragging the altar out of place. Acolytes can also sanctify it through a ritual with a Routine (+20) Scholastic Knowledge (Imperial Creed) Test. If the shrine is disrupted in either way, fresh blood runs down the walls and the cave is shaken by a distant bellow of frustration and anger. The blood all dries up and flakes away and all the severed body parts and skulls shrivel to dust, leaving the cave bare and inert.

THE PANOPLY OF LORD SUNDERBONE

This suit of Best Craftsmanship Feudal Platemail (AP 6) is imbued with daemonic hatred. It is not primitive, and grants the user the Frenzy talent if he does not have it. If the wearer already has the Frenzy talent he may enter a Frenzy as a free action and gains the Unnatural Strength (x2) trait. Whenever a character enters a Frenzy while wearing the Panoply of Lord Sunderbone he gains 1d5 Corruption and Insanity Points (roll once and apply the result to both).



AREA 12: THE CADAVER'S HIDEOUT

From a distance, nothing can be seen indicating any structure. However, marks carved on rock formations look like symbols in a secret language, and they increase in frequency as you approach the location from Gore's orders. Finally you glimpse an opening in the ground. It looks like a fumarole, like many of the other volcanic vents in this area, but no scalding sulphurous cloud belches from it. The glint of a lens can just be seen winking inside the entrance.

This is the disguised entrance to a lair used by the Cadavers to house its greatest secret, the alien creature they call Blasphemy Zero. The lair is guarded by the Cadavers gangers, a few experimental gang members who have been implanted with parasites, and Blasphemy Zero itself.

If the Acolytes enter the lair without doing anything about the pict-stealer just inside the entrance, they are spotted by the Cadavers inside and lose any element of surprise. The Acolytes can shoot out the lens of the pict-stealer with a Very Hard (-30) Ballistic Skill Test, which can be made easier with aiming and scopes as usual. Three failed shots alert the Cadavers inside as above, as they realise that the shots are not just random volcanic movement but gunfire from above. If the Acolytes shoot out the lens before they fail three times, the pict-stealer is destroyed and they can enter the lair unseen.

A short entrance tunnel leads to a structure carved out of the volcanic rock. The walls are warm to the touch and the ceiling is shored up with timbers. Black slime runs down the walls, and the heat and a strange chemical smell combine to make a close, humid atmosphere. A bank of pict-screens are mounted on one wall next to a heavy bulkhead-style door. The room is furnished only with a table and a few chairs, with a couple of rusted autoguns lying on the table.

There are no Cadavers in this area. The pict-screens show images from pict-stealers throughout the lair. One of them shows the view from the entrance pict-stealer – if the lens was shot out, this screen shows only static. Another shows a cell in which a Cadavers ganger slumps against the wall, with a fresh wound running from the top of his sternum to his navel. The third is of the operating theatre, a room with two operating tables and racks of medical implements on the walls. A fourth shows a set of barred double doors (these are the doors to Blasphemy Zero's tank room).

If the Acolytes made it into the lair unseen, the Cadavers in the room beyond the bulkhead door are not expecting them. Two are playing dice, one is sitting in a medical chair, and the fourth is inflicting decorative scars on him. If the Acolytes were spotted, or took too many shots at the pict-stealer lens, the Cadavers are in cover, waiting to open fire as soon as the Acolytes open the door.

This room is cluttered with storage crates, and drawers like those in a morgue line one wall. A medical examination chair stands in the middle of the room, along with a few tables and chairs. The top of a spiral staircase breaks through the ground at the back of the room. The air in here is very damp and close, and a thin mist clings to the ground.

The Cadavers might be defending the lair, but they are also trapped here. If one or more of them is taken down, the others flee down the stairs and open the cells, letting the shock-troopers out before taking cover at the far end of the cell corridor. They do not flee into Blasphemy Zero's tank room.

The morgue drawers indeed contain bodies. Two of the bodies are ferals, each implanted with a parasite. Three others are failed shock-troopers, Cadavers gangers whose bodies rejected the parasites. They have had their parasites removed. The morgue drawers are refrigerated, hence the mist on the floor of this room, which results from the leaky refrigeration unit and the damp air. The spiral staircase corkscrews down a short shaft cut through the stone leading to the cell corridor.

This filthy, poorly-lit corridor has cell doors along one side. Each door has a sliding cover over a small window at eye level. The corridor turns a corner after the sixth cell. Down here the air is even hotter and the walls are wet with a black substance that seems to drip out of the rock.

If they flee down here, the gangers take cover behind the corner or in the doorways of the empty cells. Cells one, four, and five are empty and the doors are not locked. The gangers open the doors to cells two and three, letting out the shock-troopers kept there. These shock-troopers yell incoherently and run out of their cells as the Acolytes descend the stairs. They are as likely to attack the gangers as the Acolytes, but they tend to go for someone who is in the open in preference to someone in cover.

Cell six contains a Cadavers ganger who reacted to parasite implantation in an unexpected way, and is being kept for observation. His torso is bloated and his head hangs lopsided, one eye sealed and the other wide and bloodshot. His mouth has been lost in bulbous growths around his neck. His right forearm has blistered up into a bundle of egg-like sacs, below the translucent surface of which writhe tiny larvae. His left arm has split down the middle into a beak-like mouth with dozens of tiny teeth. His knees now bend the wrong way, although he cannot walk since the Cadavers have chained him to the ground. The parasite inside him has grown in size and its coiled form takes up most of his oversized torso. Acolytes seeing the inhabitant of cell six must make a Challenging (+0) Willpower Test or acquire 1 Insanity Point.

Beyond the corner of the corridor are two doors. One is a single unlocked door leading to the operating room. The other is a set of double barred doors as seen on the pict-screen in the room above. In the operating room are two operating tables, and cabinets with lots of medical equipment. Some of the medical implements are real precision tools, while others look improvised or have been adapted from bayonets and combat knives. The double doors are barred on this side, so

Acolytes can lift the bar and open them. Beyond is the room in which lurks Blasphemy Zero.



Blasphemy Zero

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
26	48	36	84	08	67	52	74	02

Movement: Immobile

Wounds: 36

Skills: Awareness +10, Psyniscience +20.

Talents: Corpus Conversion, Discipline Focus (Telekenisis), Favoured by the Warp, Psy Rating 4, Resistance (Psychic Powers), Strong Minded.

Traits: Fear 2, Fluid Tank*, From Beyond, Oxygen Suffocation**, Size (Enormous), Strange Physiology.

Weapons: Corpse-Tentacles (1d10+3 I, Pen 0, Toxic).

Psychic Powers: Fling, Force Barrage, Force Bolt, Precision Telekinesis, Psychic Crush, Psychic Shriek.

Blasphemy Zero is highly intelligent, but its thought process is so alien that it cannot understand verbal language, nor will it attempt to be understood. It will simply float in its tank until the Acolytes attack or attempt to psychically communicate with it, at which point it begins to lash out with psychic powers.

***Fluid Tank:** The easiest way to destroy Blasphemy Zero is to shatter the tank. The tank has 20 Wounds and an Armour Value of 10. Once the tank has suffered 10 or more Wounds it cracks open and the fluid within begins to evaporate. This fills the air with a corrosive gas. Every round anyone without a respirator (or that isn't holding their breath) suffers 1d10 Toxic damage that cannot be reduced by armour but may be reduced by Toughness. Anyone with a respirator (or that is holding their breath) suffers 1d5 Toxic damage as their skin and eyes burn. Characters with an environmentally sealed suit are not hurt.

****Oxygen Suffocation:** As soon as the tank is destroyed (reduced to 0 wounds) Blasphemy Zero will begin to suffocate visibly (let the players know that it is flailing, obviously dying), a process that takes 10 rounds. Acolytes are free to leave the room at any point (if they can) as Blasphemy Zero strikes out against them psychically.

A wave of wet, stinking heat hits you as the door opens. The room beyond is taken up mostly by a circular tank, its sides shoulder-high. Walkways lead up and above the tank, while gas bottles and monitoring cogitators stand around the sides of the room. In the tank is a creature whose form above the water consists of a huge bulbous mass, pale and pinkish in colour, covered in pulsing veins. A lump moves beneath the skin, splitting open to reveal a single yellowish eye with a slit pupil.

Seeing the alien horror of Blasphemy Zero forces the Acolytes to make a Difficult (-10) Willpower Test or acquire 1 Insanity Point.

Blasphemy Zero assumes the Acolytes are there to kill it and responds accordingly. If the Acolytes just shut the door and leave it where it is, there is little it can do as it cannot leave its tank. If they try to kill it, however, it defends itself using its tentacles and its psychic powers.

The liquid sloshes and a tentacle emerges from the tank. The tentacle terminates in the upper torso of what was once a Cadavers ganger, his skin pallid and fish-like, his mouth lolling open mindlessly. His arms and spine bend in unnatural, impossible ways, the movement controlled now by the creature to which his body is fused. More tentacles burst from the surface of the tank, lashing around in anger as the psychic weight of the creature's wrath hammers against you.

The tank is full not only of Blasphemy Zero's abhorrent alien form, but of its parasitic offspring. Several dozen of the alien worms swim in the slimy, viscous liquid in the tank. Killing Blasphemy Zero kills its offspring as well, which cannot survive without the psychic direction of their parent. This also kills the shock-troopers already created by the Cadavers, meaning they are not present to turn the tide at the Battle of Blinding Gulch. If the Acolytes discover but do not kill Blasphemy Zero, the implanted shock-troopers are present at the battle as planned.

DESIGNER'S NOTE: REAL MEN DON'T LOOK AT EXPLOSIONS

It is highly likely that one of the Acolytes will want to simply solve the issue with large doses of explosives. The GM has two ways to proceed in this situation.

If the GM wishes to extend the duration of the adventure (or slow the pacing down a bit) then Blasphemy Zero, as a powerful Telekenetic, simply throws the grenades back at the Acolytes, or out of the room.

On the other hand, it is likely that Blasphemy Zero has never seen a grenade! The Gangers have never had one, and its limited experience with humanity may not have prepared it to defend against explosives. The doorway into the room provides an effective choke point, and an Acolyte can simply throw a grenade into the tank, or strap explosives to it, and run from the room. This will kill Blasphemy Zero, but the resulting toxic release will make the building uninhabitable, and eventually collapse.

This can be a great opportunity to give militant Acolytes a moment to shine. If the Acolytes are afforded this rare easy victory, it can embolden them against the threats they are sure to face in later chapters. The drama of this xenos extermination does not need to come in a combat encounter, instead the GM can describe the event in detail as the Cadaver's Hideout is destroyed.

THE BATTLE OF BLINDING GULCH

After two days, a dread comes over the people of Blinding Gulch. The drinking holes and other establishments empty as patrons and staff go back to their homes in the Face. Windows are shuttered and doors are bolted. The streets of Blinding Gulch are empty.

The forces of the Cadavers and Skarit's Dragons line up on opposite sides of the settlement's main street. Each side has a couple dozen gangers. Gore and Lord Sunderbone lead their gangs in person, and the Acolytes get a look at them for the first time. The Acolytes may now line up with the side they have chosen to support in the battle. The orders they are given by the leader of their chosen gang are simple – help the gang's effort by killing the opposing gang's leader.

If the Acolytes choose not to support one gang over the other, they can simply observe the battle or they can intervene to take down both gangs. The upper floor of the Call to Arms or the Spent Shell are good places to watch the battle.

The two sides line up and glower at one another from across the settlement's main drag. The sluice-gates open to the river of lava, and the town and landscape for miles is illuminated - Blinding Gulch's "Dawn." Gunshots ring out, and the battle has begun. Lord Sunderbone leads his gangers from the front, his magnificent red armour marking him out in the bedlam. Gore hangs back, a corona of strange dark fire playing around him as he directs his troops with simple gestures and barked commands. Sunderbone wields a mighty broadsword that seems to hack off a limb or head with every blow. The Cadavers dart between cover and vault through doors and windows into the lower floors of the buildings along the street, while the Skarit's Dragons charge across the open, relying on their fury and bloodlust as the Cadavers rely on Gore's tactics.

If the Acolytes did not destroy the Khornate shrine and did not destroy Blasphemy Zero, the battle continues as follows:

From among the Cadavers emerges a cadre of slobbering, contorted gangers, their bare torsos still bearing livid scars as if their chests were opened up and then crudely stitched back together. The altered Cadavers, surely changed by mutation or some other unnatural means, shriek and howl as they lope into the fight. Hideous claws extrude from their hands and they leap among the Skarit's Dragons, tearing gangers apart. Lord Sunderbone responds by bellowing a prayer of unearthly syllables, and, accompanied by a rumbling of the earth and a scalding-hot gale that screams through the settlement, his form shifts and grows as unholy power fills him. His armour flows and becomes one with his skin, he doubles in height and bulk, and a pair of bloody horns emerge from his forehead. The Skarit's Dragons rally around their bestial leader, and at his yell of "Blood for the Blood God!" surge into the fray, their fury redoubled.

If the Acolytes destroyed the Khornate shrine but not Blasphemy Zero, the battle continues as follows:

From among the Cadavers emerge a cadre of slobbering, contorted gangers, their bare torsos still bearing livid scars as if their chests were opened up and then crudely stitched back together. The altered Cadavers, surely changed by mutation or some other unnatural means, shriek and howl as they lope into the fight. Hideous claws extrude from their hands and they leap among the Skarit's Dragons, tearing gangers apart. Lord Sunderbone yells "Blood for the Blood God!" and for a moment it seems the Skarit's Dragons will drive back the Cadavers' mutated shock-troopers with renewed fury. Sunderbone is overwhelmed and dragged to the ground by the mutants. His gangers drag him out of the melee at the cost of several of their own, but already dismay is spreading through their ranks. "The gods have abandoned us!" cries one of the Skarit's Dragons. "Khorne has forsaken his own!" cries another. Many of the Skarit's Dragons flee in spite of Sunderbone's roared orders to stay and fight. Even Sunderbone retreats from the street, however, as the Cadavers' shock-troopers run rampant through the fleeing gangers.

If the Acolytes destroyed Blasphemy Zero but not the Khornate shrine, the battle proceeds as follows:

Lord Sunderbone bellows a prayer of unearthly syllables and, accompanied by a rumbling of the earth and a scalding-hot gale that screams through the settlement, his form shifts and grows as unholy power fills him. His armour flows and becomes one with his skin, he doubles in height and bulk, and a pair of bloody horns emerge from his forehead. The Skarit's Dragons rally around their bestial leader, and at his yell of "Blood for the Blood God!" surge into the fray, their fury redoubled. The Cadavers have no answer to the sudden onslaught and Sunderbone rampages through their ranks. Even those sheltering in buildings are not safe as Sunderbone's devastating charge takes him right through walls and barred doors, and his greatsword, now wielded in one hand, reaps a hideous toll among the Cadavers. Gore yells the order to retreat but his gangers are already running and few of them maintain any order. They are shot or cut down by the dozens as they run.

If both the Khornate shrine and Blasphemy Zero were destroyed, the battle goes as follows:

The two forces are evenly matched, and even as the bodies pile up neither can gain the upper hand. The opening exchanges kill dozens but they are not enough to decide the battle. Sunderbone and Gore both send attacks aimed at the opposing leader, but each leader is savvy enough to fend off such attacks or send his gangers to counter them. Bullets streak from every direction and the battle turns into a bloody stalemate that looks like it will be decided by attrition rather than any grand tactical move.

At this point the Acolytes can help decide the course of the battle by intervening on either side, or they can stay out of the battle entirely. It is obvious to them that only by killing one gang's leader can they have any impact on the battle's outcome. They can, after killing one leader, even proceed to kill the other. The encounter against the gang leader depends on whether they have cut off that leader from his source of power – the shrine in Sunderbone's case, and Blasphemy Zero in Gore's.

KILLING GORE

Gore, the leader of the Cadavers, is no less dangerous than Lord Sunderbone in his own right. An insidious and cunning psyker, his devoted gangers will give their lives to defend him and he is more than willing to let them do so as he uses his powers from a safe distance. What he lacks compared to Sunderbone in raw combat prowess, he makes up for in intelligence and the versatility of his psychic powers.

If Gore is accompanied by the Shock-Troopers (one per Acolyte) created from Blasphemy Zero's offspring, the battle against him is deadlier still. The Shock-Troopers obey him without question and pin the Acolytes down in melee while Gore's psychic assaults finish off those who do not succumb to their mutated claws.

Gore 								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
30	47	29	35	42	38	44	33	36

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 15

Skills: Awareness +10, Blather, Carouse +20, Charm, Chem-Use, Climb, Command, Deceive, Dodge, Evaluate, Gamble, Scrutiny, Security, Psyniscience +10.

Talents: Corpus Conversion, Psy Rating 4.

Weapons: Sword (2d10+2, Pen 2, Primitive, Unwieldy).

Psychic Powers: Dominate, Mind Scan, Telepathy, Terrify.

Gore's Shock-Troopers 								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
36	05	35	42	32	11	18	22	09

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 10

Skills: Dodge +10.

Talents: Frenzy, Swift Attack.

Traits: Natural Weapons, Natural Armour (4), Unnatural Strength (x2).

Armour: Natural (4 All).

Weapons: Mutated Claws (1d10+6, Pen 0, Primitive).

KILLING LORD SUNDERBONE

Lord Sunderbone is a dangerous opponent, but one who only has one way of fighting – getting up close and letting his strength and aggression decide the outcome. He is accompanied by a handful of toughened gangers who are as adept with their guns as they are in hand-to-hand combat, but Sunderbone himself prefers to fight face-to-face with his broadsword.

Without Khorne's patronage, he yells prayers to his god as he fights, revealing his allegiance to the Dark Gods with every heretical word. If the fight goes against him he curses Khorne for abandoning him, and not lending him the power that is his right after offering hundreds of sacrifices up to the Blood God.

If he is able to call upon the patronage of Khorne, fighting Lord Sunderbone is a very different proposition. He fights alone, since his gangers know better than to get too close to him, lest his battle-frenzy lead him to count them amongst his tally of victims. But with the power of Khorne flooding through him, he needs no allies. His huge form can absorb appalling amounts of damage, and his sword, glowing with sigils and crackling with the power of the Warp, can deal it out. In this state Sunderbone is a monster in every sense: inhuman, relentless, and terrifying. His sole purpose when channelling the will of Khorne is to surround himself with a whirlwind of gore, cover himself in the blood of his enemies, and reap a tally of skulls to be offered up for the Throne of the Blood God.

Lord Sunderbone 								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
48	22	52	51	30	37	29	31	31

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 20

Skills: Awareness+10, Blather, Carouse+20, Charm, Climb, Command, Dodge, Evaluate, Gamble, Intimidate, Scrutiny.

Talents: Battle Rage, Frenzy, Swift Attack, Lightning Attack, Furious Assault.

Armour: Feudal Plate (5 All) or Panoply of Lord Sunderbone (see page 43).

Weapons: Greatsword (2d10+5, Pen 2, Primitive, Unwieldy).

Devotee of Khorne: If the Acolytes have not toppled his shrine to Khorne Lord Sunderbone gains the Size (Hulking) and Unnatural Strength (x2) Traits.

Skarrit's Dragons 								
WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
32	34	31	32	35	26	28	26	22

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 10

Skills: Dodge.

Talents: Iron Jaw.

Armour: Gang Leathers (2 All but head).

Weapons: Club (1d10+3 I, Pen 0, Primitive), Stub Automatic (30m, S/3/–, 1d10+3 I, Pen 0, Clip 9, Reload Full).

THE OUTCOME

The outcome of the Battle of Blinding Gulch depends on the Acolytes' actions:

- If both the shrine and Blasphemy Zero were destroyed, and if the Acolytes do not intervene and kill one gang leader, the battle is a stalemate.
- If neither the shrine or Blasphemy Zero were destroyed, and the Acolytes do not intervene and kill one gang leader, the battle is a stalemate.
- If the shrine was destroyed, but Blasphemy Zero was not, and the Acolytes do not intervene to kill one of the gang leaders, the Cadavers win the battle.
- If Blasphemy Zero was destroyed, but the shrine was not, and the Acolytes do not intervene to kill one of the gang leaders, the Skarit's Dragons win the battle.
- If the Acolytes kill Lord Sunderbone, regardless of any other factors, the Cadavers win the battle.
- If the Acolytes kill Gore, regardless of any other factors, the Skarit's Dragons win the battle.
- If the Acolytes kill both gang leaders, the battle is a truce, but with their leaders dead the gangsters are unable to defend themselves when the population of Blinding Gulch takes advantage of the battle's aftermath to rid themselves of the gangs that have plagued them for so long.

THE BATTLE IS A STALEMATE:

The attrition continues for more than an hour, with isolated knots of gangsters sniping at each other across the street. Finally both leaders come to the same decision – the battle cannot be won. The order goes out to retreat and both gangs, severely depleted, quit the field, leaving the main street of Blinding Gulch strewn with bodies and riddled with bullet holes.

THE CADAVERS WIN:

The Skarit's Dragons make one last frontal assault, yelling battle-cries and leaping from cover. They are met by a disciplined wall of gunfire directed by Gore, and more Dragons fall with every step. The few that reach the Cadavers's positions are too few to do anything more than strike a few lucky blows with swords and bayonets before the Cadavers drag them down and butcher them. Victorious, Gore orders his forces to fall back with a simple gesture. As they quit the field the gangsters execute the few Dragons left alive, slaying them as they lie wounded in the dust. Not one Dragon escapes the slaughter, and by the battle's end Blinding Gulch is in the hands of the Cadavers for good.

THE SKARIT'S DRAGONS WIN:

"Now, sons of the blood! Now, you brothers of fury! Upon them! Reap from them your tally of skulls! For the Blood God!" Lord Sunderbone's battle-cry is met with a mighty roar as the Skarit's Dragons charge as one, running through the gunfire into the Cadavers' positions. The Cadavers have no answer to such an onslaught. The Skarit's Dragons butcher every ganger they find, seeming more like daemons than men as they cover themselves in blood and hack the bodies of their enemies apart. So awful is the slaughter that the main street of Blinding Gulch runs red with blood before the battle is done. Finally, sated with death, Lord Sunderbone orders his men to leave the battlefield and set up an offering to Khorne. The Skarit's Dragons take several of the corpses with them, and leave the battlefield a hideous, bloody marsh strewn with body parts.

BOTH GANG LEADERS ARE KILLED:

Their leaders dead, both sides fall back in shock, confusion leaving them unable to retreat or advance. Men in knots of two or three hole up and crouch in cover, uncertain of what to do next, not daring to move lest the enemy shoot them down.

From the direction of the Face, a lone figure walks towards the battlefield. It is an old man, a Hive Falls farmer by the look of him, and he carries a staff tipped with a long hook. It is presumably a tool of his trade, but he carries it like a weapon. More follow him, emerging from their homes on the Face, armed with whatever they can get their hands on – guns, knives, tools, simple clubs, or just their bare hands and teeth. Many gangsters see what is happening but only a few shots ring out before the people of Blinding Gulch fall upon them with the fury born of years of suffering the violence of the competing gangs. In a terrible release of anger and grief both gangs cease to exist, either cut down where they cover or shot as they flee. A few of them escape into the wastes, but the majority die there, victims of the underhive's most brutal justice.



THE AFTERMATH

However the Battle of Blinding Gulch ends, the Acolytes can now receive the information on Venomskin's whereabouts. If the Acolytes intervened on behalf of one gang, that gang's leader offers up the information the Acolytes desire in return for their service in the battle.

If the gangs fought to a standstill, the Acolytes can receive Venomskin's whereabouts from the people of Blinding Gulch. After the battle, Kayala (of Kayala's Guns) approaches the Acolytes.

"This isn't the end of our troubles. They'll rebuild and they'll be back. But before that, we might have another problem to deal with. For years now, the biggest gangs around here have protected the location of one Venomskin. A lot of people up top would like to see old 'Skin hang, but he's made friends with the top dogs and they keep him safe. Now, neither the Dragons nor the Cadavers can do squat for him. The Magistratum will come down here once they realise the gangs are down. Maybe even the Arbites. Maybe someone even worse than that. 'cept maybe they'll let us be if there's no Venomskin to find. Word around the campfire is he holds up in an old guilded land train that's buried two days' hike northwards of here, where two lava rivers converge. If he's taken out then we might not have Magistratum boots stamping all over us looking for him. I don't care what you came down here for, but if it was for Venomskin, then you got him. There's no one left who can stop you now."

If both gangs were destroyed, the people of Blinding Gulch offer up whatever information the Acolytes ask for. The Acolytes receive a -4 to their Reputation Modifier. One of the inhabitants of the Face – the Acolytes recognise this as Khol's father if they have met him already – approaches them as the dust settles from the massacre.

"The people of Blinding Gulch owe you, friend. We ain't got much to give, but my guess is you came down here for a reason and maybe we can help you with that. These scum took my boy's life, and now they've paid for his and all the other lives they took. What do you want down among the ash? If it is in our power to give it to you, you have it."

If the Acolytes have discovered the plans of Kris'an, and they have alerted anyone in town, they are approached by Doc Weston, as well.

"Thank you for finally ridding our town of these two evils. Of course, they will not be the last gangs in Blinding Gulch. There's power to be seized, and I doubt the vacuum will last. But, with Kris'an gone, at least we don't have to worry about being sold from within. Didn't anyone tell you? I told her that I still have friends in the Guard, and that, if she didn't abandon her plans for this town, I would have her brought up on charges for selling contraband. I don't think we'll be hearing from her again. Thank you again. I don't know why you folks came here, but you've saved a whole lot of people, today."

Neither the gangs nor the people of Blinding Gulch have very much to give save Venomskin's location. Requests made by the Acolytes of the gang leaders or townsfolk are fulfilled, as long as they are reasonable (neither gangs, nor the townsfolk have much to give materially aside from Poor Quality guns). Whatever else the Acolytes can squeeze out of the underhivers, they have what they came for – the location of the forger Venomskin.

BALANCING THE BRAWL

For the most part, the difficulty of challenges in The Apostasy Gambit can be fairly low for Acolytes of rank 7 or above. If the Acolytes are having an easy time up until this point, that can be used by the GM to present the Battle of Blinding Gulch as a turning point in the overall tone. From here on out, the Acolytes are unlikely to gain a moment to breath, as they unmask the false Ignato and rush to prevent the real threat from resurrecting Saint Drusus. The threat level of Lord Sunderbone or Gore must be increased significantly to challenge Throne Agents. To increase the difficulty of the battle, both forces should replace their troops with more difficult foes.

Ascension Throne Agents will face a Herald of Khorne (see page 204 of Ascension) in service of the Skarit's Dragons in addition to the forces already in play during the combat. This Daemon, recognize the Acolytes as the greatest threat and will immediately break away to challenge them directly. It desires nothing more than to best the greatest opponent on the battlefield in single combat, and will stop at nothing (short of banishment) to achieve this goal.

As the Throne Agents deal with this combat, they will have little chance to effect the larger battle. If they wish to side with one of the forces (which is unlikely at this juncture) then Throne Agents must do so instead of dealing with the Herald of Khorne. This is a risky venture, as the Herald sees ignoring him as a grave insult, and will immediately move to attack any Throne Agent that is not attempting to defeat him.

Unless they intervene, Sunderbone will defeat the Cadavers, he and a dozen of his men will remain to challenge the Throne Agents after they deal with the Herald of Khorne. He is likely to be little threat to the Throne Agents when they are unwounded and ready for battle, but after dispatching such a powerful daemon he knows they are weakened, and his chance for glory is now!

This is clearly the moment when Throne Agents know the threat is far more serious than they previously believed. From this point on the challenges are far more difficult, and they must be prepared for a gauntlet of danger if they hope to prevent the most horrible of Apostasies from taking place.

VENOMSKIN'S HIDEOUT

Once the Acolytes have discovered the location of Venomskin's Hideout they can begin the journey across the Infernis to his hidden location.

After two days of hiking across the scorching, treacherous Infernis, the temperature rises dramatically. The source is obvious – in the underground twilight gleam two rivers of lava, oozing their way down shelves of igneous rock. The rivers meet in black-scabbled rapids, a churning mass of molten rock that dwarfs the tumbled ruins of scrap metal on the shore. Among the ruins is a hatch set into the ground – had you not known there was something here, it would have been easy to ignore.

The hatch in the ground leads to the interior of a guildier land train, a huge tracked vehicle buried below layers of volcanic deposits. The Acolytes are not the first to have tracked Venomskin down here – an assassin trained by the Maledictor's Hand and sent by Caecilius Vraine – has just poisoned Venomskin. Acolytes who search around the hatch can detect disturbed ash that suggests that someone has used the hatch recently with a Hard (-20) Search Test.

The interior of the buried land train is corroded and dirty. Three carriages lie ahead of you and you can see all the way to the end of the train. You stand in a carriage that was used for storage, with ore containers stacked up empty around you. The next carriage has several bunks racked against the walls, a field kitchen, and other amenities. The final carriage looks like it was once a luxury passenger car, with lavish drapings and furnishings. You can just see the figure of a man sitting in an upholstered chair facing away from you, with a suggestion of bright patterns on his scalp.

The figure in the chair wears a shabby pair of overalls. Underneath it, his skin is covered in bright electoos, as if he was a walking canvas for a work of vibrant and abstract art. His eyes roll to focus on you and his lips work painfully as he tries to speak. The rest of him seems paralysed. In his hands he still holds a sheet of parchment on which a message has been written in a scratchy red-inked hand. The room has a grand four-poster bed, a portrait of Lord Sector Hax, various items of luxuriant furniture and a work table covered in bottles of ink, quills, samples of paper and parchment, and all manner of other forging gear. Everything has a veneer of threadbare age, of wealth turned shabby and patchwork with the years.

This unfortunate is Venomskin. He is paralysed and can do nothing but speak. In his hands is a note that Jordi left on the chair, informing him that he is going to die. The poison in Venomskin's veins is about to kill him and he can do nothing but utter his dying words before he expires, "The portrait. Insurance. Evidence..."

When Venomskin breathes his last. The Acolytes now have the opportunity to search the guildier land train. The letter in Venomskin's dead hands was left on his chair by Jordi, and it informs Venomskin that he is about to die. The death note is a handout on page 69. Behind the portrait of Lord Sector Hax is a dataslate loaded with a pict-file showing Caecilius/"Ignato" ordering Venomskin to fulfil his part in Vraine's plan. This is the conclusive evidence the Acolytes' patron Inquisitor needs before he despatches them to capture or kill "Ignato". It was recorded and kept by Venomskin to use as blackmail material in case 'Ignato' ever turned on him. The file on the dataslate can be accessed by any Acolyte.

The image is recorded by a pict-stealer implanted behind Venomskin's eyes. His brightly electoored arms are visible at the periphery of his vision. He looks onto a room which you recognise as the hidden wine cellar beneath the Cathedral of Illumination. Around a large circular table sit several figures in the garb of the Ecclesiarchy, many with their faces hidden by masks or hoods. One of the unmasked figures is Arch-Cardinal Ignato.

"Brethren," begins Ignato, "I have brought among us the forger Venomskin, the final piece of our plan. With his skills, the false tomes of Drusus' writings can be created, and through them the strife we seek will be created."

One of the hooded figures speaks. "You. Forger. Are your skills sufficient?"

"They are," replies Venomskin, "If you rounded up everything I've faked, there would be noble households with their entire art galleries and libraries emptied. There isn't a world in the Calixis Sector where I haven't peddled a work of art or an ancient book that was born in my workshop."

Another of the figures speaks, "Can your work convince the finest Ecclesiarchical minds that they read the hand of Saint Drusus himself?"

"I could fake the hand of the God-Emperor Himself," replies Venomskin, his voice ringing against the subterranean walls.

"Good," continues Ignato, "If you assembled masters of the Maledictor's Hand are satisfied, then I can begin work immediately. Master Venomskin's work will convince half the Calixis Sector's faithful that Saint Drusus himself urges them to war. The other half will have no choice but to enter into war, and the whole sector will be dragged into bloodshed. From the bedlam that ensues, our goals will be forged."

"But can we trust him?" says another.

"I have ensured Master Venomskin knows how far the Maledictor's Hand can reach," replies Ignato, "Merely by finding him, when he takes such pains to stay hidden, we have demonstrated there is no escape should he cross us."

The image flickers and goes dark, the file ends.

EXPERIENCE

The Acolytes have finally found the proof they require to controng Arch-Cardinal Ignato.

Experience Earned: Each player should earn at least 500 xp even if using the detail-based experience method, as this is the primary purpose of their mission, and success in it is all that matters within Blinding Gulch.



PIETY AFLAME

THE BURNING CITY

•

NO PLACE TO DIE

•

LAST WILL AND
TESTAMENT

CHAPTER III: PIETY AFLAME

"Such beauty in this place. It will be matched only by the beauty of its destruction."

—Caecilius Vraine

The Acolytes now have all the proof they need of Ignato's guilt. Their patron Inquisitor, given the evidence of Venomskin's pict-file, immediately despatches them back to the cathedral to arrest or kill Arch-Cardinal Ignato.

However, their task is complicated by events that have transpired since they went into Gunmetal City's underhive. A rumour has surfaced that the altarpiece in the Nave of the cathedral (the same one that concealed the entrance to the hidden wing) has begun weeping blood, and the image of the Emperor has begun speaking and imparting great wisdom to those who listen. Hordes of pilgrims besiege the cathedral, hoping to glimpse and hear the miraculous image of the Emperor. The cathedral has been barricaded and no one can get in or out. The Inquisition does not know what is really happening inside the cathedral but it is possible that Ignato is trying to destroy any evidence in the cathedral of his wrongdoing. The Acolytes can learn all this from their patron Inquisitor, from the various information brokers as they journey, or from rumours and hearsay they hear as they emerge from the Infernis.

THE BURNING CITY

The magnificence of the Cathedral of Illumination contrasts with the vast horde of pilgrims that surround it, as if a great sea of humanity has flooded the upper levels of Hive Tarsus. In the baking sun they swarm against the walls of the cathedral, thousands upon thousands crammed into the area in front of the main doors. Shrines and chapels surrounding the cathedral are already aflame or collapsed, and smoke coils from the cathedral itself. Burned-out wrecks of emergency vehicles dot the scene, and Magistratum units on the cathedral roof snipe at pilgrims trying to scale the sculpted walls.

The return from the Underhive involves a final airlift on Valkyrie Gunship back to the Cathedral proper. If the Acolytes attempt to divert their transport from it's current approach, the pilot will inform them that the Cathedral has several Hydra flak cannons trained on their position, they have been ordered to land near the Nave.



THE LANDING PAD

The Acolytes approach the cathedral by air, as they did when they first arrived, by landing on the pad adjoining the Nave. They are confronted there by a squad of Magistratum troops, led by Deputy Castigator Eshervan.

A young man, his carapace armour covered in purity seals and devotional script, yells a command at you. His shock maul is gripped tightly in his hand and shows a fresh smear of blood. Behind him are a half dozen Magistratum troops, armed with shotguns, their eyes wide and alert for danger.

"You! This area is locked down! We have a state of emergency here! Identify and explain yourselves, now!"

Eshervan is an Arbitrator (see page 336 of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook) and he is accompanied by six Enforcers (see page 339, of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook). Eshervan and his men are demoralised and nervous. They have fought off frenzied attempts by thousands of pilgrims to fight their way into the cathedral and are badly lacking in sleep and ammunition. They have itchy trigger fingers and Eshervan and his men have to be talked down from trying to arrest or attack the Acolytes. The Acolytes can do this with a **Hard (-20) Command Test**, or a **Challenging (+0) Blather or Intimidate Test**. Acolytes who display an Inquisitorial Rosette gain +10 to this Test. Arbitrators may attempt this Command Test as if they are trained in Command. If they talk down Eshervan, he calls his men off and allows the Acolytes into the cathedral. If they fail, Eshervan's squad opens fire. Once this happens, the Acolytes can convince the Magistratum troops to stand down with a **Difficult (-10) Command Test** or a **Hard (-20) Intimidate Test** as a Half Action. Eshervan will not accompany the Acolytes, electing to remain outside the cathedral and assist with suppressing the riots.

Once the Acolytes have negotiated Eshervan's squad, they can get inside the cathedral Nave in the same way as when they first arrived. The Nave has been barricaded with several makeshift fortifications set up across it to form defensive lines in case the main doors are forced open. The doors themselves are shored up with timbers and stone columns. From here, the Acolytes can move freely throughout the cathedral.

INSIDE THE CATHEDRAL

Upon entering the cathedral the Acolytes will encounter several challenges not present during their first visit. Firstly, the Cloisters Temporal are in smouldering ruins, having been attacked and set on fire by pilgrims who broke through. Several charred bodies lie among the smoking wreckage. The Hospital is currently on fire, with evacuated patients moved to corridors, storage rooms, side chapels and anywhere else that can hold them. The fires are being fought by various choristers, lesser clergy, and other cathedral inhabitants who have given up trying to save the Hospital and are just trying to keep the flames from spreading.

Secondly, the inhabitants of the Cathedral of Illumination may have cause to view the Acolytes with suspicion depending on their behaviour during their earlier visit. For instance, being caught breaking into the Arch-Cardinal's Quarters, stealing from the Sacristy, or using coercion against Lector Xavieticus are actions likely to turn the cathedral's defenders against the Acolytes.

Sister Superior Oksana and her novices are prepared to defend the cathedral with violence if necessary. She is quick to assume the Acolytes are here for nefarious purposes if they conducted themselves suspiciously before. The Acolytes are likely to encounter her as she patrols the cathedral or oversees her novices resting in the Penitents' Cells.

If the Acolytes have not brought suspicion on themselves, Oksana can tell them of the situation in the cathedral. No one can enter or leave except by air, but Ignato has forbidden any of the cathedral's inhabitants to leave. It was "Ignato" who ordered the cathedral to be sealed when rumours of the miraculous altarpiece surfaced. Oksana does not know how the rumour got started, for nothing miraculous has happened concerning the altarpiece. Oksana grimly acknowledges that she may have to kill pilgrims who force their way in, to protect the cathedral's relics and clergy. She does not accompany the Acolytes to confront "Ignato," even if they are on good terms with her—pilgrims have already breached some of the entrances into the Cloisters Temporal and she and her novices cannot leave their posts when the main doors might fall at any moment.

Exorcist Amortus is also primed to take on the Acolytes if they have acted suspiciously. He might be encountered anywhere in the cathedral, for he is prowling its halls looking for the daemons he believes have infiltrated the clergy and spread the false rumours of the miraculous altarpiece. If the Acolytes brought suspicion on themselves, Amortus believes they are the vessels for daemons come to destroy the cathedral and he makes this belief very clear as he fights them.

If he is on good terms with the Acolytes, especially if the Acolytes successfully assisted in his exorcism of Caius Moy, Amortus can inform them of the situation much as Oksana can. Amortus is quick to blame the current situation on daemoniac influence—Caius Moy's possession, in his mind, was just the first symptom of a daemoniac assault.



CONFRONTING "IGNATO"

Neither Amortus nor Oksana know exactly where "Ignato" is, although they do not believe he has left the cathedral. He is, in fact, in the Garden of Repose, waiting for the pilgrims to break through the main doors. When this happens he does everything he can to ensure the whole cathedral is set ablaze, and then he quietly disappears to be assumed dead among the carnage. He sits as if in meditation, and does not even look around when the Acolytes first enter the Garden.

"I had wondered when someone would come for me. I think I always knew that this disguise would not hold up, not forever. But know this, servants of the Emperor. Without men and women like me, the Calixis Sector and this whole Imperium will sink ever deeper into sin. We live through the death throes of humanity and only through strife can it be strengthened enough to survive. Strife such as the bedlam the Maledictor's Hand seeks to inspire!"

The Arch-Cardinal stands, and with a disgusting sucking sound, his skin sloughs off his body. He has been wearing Ignato's skin as a disguise, like a full-body mask—his true form is slimmer and younger than Ignato's, with piercing green eyes and sharp, cruel features. From beneath the Arch-Cardinal's robes spring a pair of shimmering multicoloured wings, and feathers shower down everywhere. Whoever this imposter is, he wields inhuman powers and looks intent on using them against you.

For all his bluster, however, Vraine is not as certain about the Maledictor's Hand as he claims. When nearing defeat, he warns the Acolytes of the threat posed by the real Ignato, all the while continuing to fight for his life..

"Fools! You headstrong fools! When I die, the real Arch-Cardinal Ignato will be set free! It is only my mind keeping him caged! Nothing I sought to achieve can compare to the madness he will inflict! You small-minded brutes, you Imperial lapdogs! You know nothing of what will be unleashed upon you! Nothing!"

If the Acolytes proceed to kill Vraine, he uses his dying breath to express satisfaction that at least they will all suffer when Ignato's own plans come to fruition.

"What you sow with my death, you shall reap in time. Ignato is free now. I know what he desires. And you will howl with regret to see it pass..."

RAISING THE STAKES (ASCENSION)

If the Acolytes are above Rank 7, then increase Vraine's Willpower to 60, his wounds to 29, and his Psy Rating to 7. In addition he knows every Psychic Power in the Psychokinesis Discipline (see page 132 ASCENSION).



Caecilius Vraine, The False Ignato

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
38	42	28	39	32	61	39	50	41

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 19

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Charm (Fel) +10, Ciphers (Occult) (Int), +20, Command (Fel) +20, Common Lore (Ecclesiarchy) (Int) +20, Common Lore (Imperial Creed) (Int) +20, Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +20, Disguise (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag), Forbidden Lore (Heresy) (Int), Forbidden Lore (Psykers) (Int) +10, Invocation (WP), Literacy (Int) +20, Logic (Int), Medicae (Int), Psyniscience (Per) +10, Scholastic Lore (Imperial Creed) (Int) +20.

Talents: Air of Authority, Chem Geld, Corpus Conversion, Dark Soul, Die Hard, Discipline Focus (Telepathy), Favoured by the Warp, Insanely Faithful, Into the Jaws of Hell, Master Orator, Paranoia, Psy Rating 5, Power Well (3), Resistance (Psychic Powers), Strong-minded, Unshakeable Faith.

Traits: Hoverer (3).

Gear: The Icon of Divine Mandate.

Weapons: Best Craftsmanship Staff (1d10+3 I, Balanced).

Psychic Powers: Vraine knows every Psychic Power from the Telepathy and Biomancy disciplines.

***The Icon of Divine Mandate:** This symbol of Ignato's authority also generates a powerful force field fuelled by the bearer's own force of will. Any time Ignato suffers one or more Wounds from an attack he may make a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test**. If he achieves one or more Degrees of Success the attack is ignored.

As soon as he is attacked Vraine leaps into the air, using his ability to hover to stay out of the way of melee attacks. He prefers to use Terrify to incapacitate foes before he uses Constrict on the weakest looking victim. If he is reduced below 10 Wounds he will use Corpus Conversion to fuel a Psychic Shriek before choking another victim.

Should the Acolytes subdue and capture Vraine instead of killing him, Vraine uses a psychic suicide method to destroy his conscious mind, leaving himself an empty shell capable only of the most basic functions of life. His eyes roll back in his head and a trickle of blood runs from his ear. Though Vraine continues to live, his mind is utterly blank and interrogating him yields nothing.

When Vraine is dead (or his mind is destroyed), the whole cathedral shakes. The glowglobes overhead flicker and several burst and wink out, leaving the Garden of Repose swathed in shadows. The whole cathedral is darkened, with the echo of Vrain's dying mind having rippled through the whole building. Most of the power in the building goes out. The security system protecting the Arch-Cardinal's Quarters fails and the Acolytes are now able to access it freely. If it does not occur to them to check out the Arch-Cardinal's Quarters, they might pass it on their way out and see the door hanging open, or Lector Xavieticus can find them and, if the Acolytes tell him that they have defeated "Ignato," he can suggest they check his Quarters for evidence about his crimes.

IGNATO'S FREEDOM

With the extinguishing of Vraine's mind, either through death or psychic suicide, the device holding the real Ignato is deactivated. If the Acolytes check out the Arch-Cardinal's Quarters, they find the statue used to hold him smashed open, spilling medical equipment across the floor, with an accompanying hole in the ceiling of the quarters. If they do not investigate the Arch-Cardinal's Quarters, they witness the real Ignato using daemonic magic to fly out of the cathedral and to freedom.

An explosion blasts through the roof of the cathedral, scattering several gilded statues. From the hole opened in the roof hurtles a human figure, glistening and red. It has no skin, and the wet rawness of its muscles is exposed. The figure flies away from the cathedral, smoke swirling behind it as it disappears between the spires of Hive Tarsus. You think you can hear the sound of laughter far off, but it is lost among the sounds of the baying pilgrims and the flames leaping from the cathedral.

THE AFTERMATH

The Acolytes can bring the mindless or dead Vraine to their patron Inquisitor at the Inquisitorial fortress of the Tricorn in Hive Sibellus. If he is dead, Vraine is thoroughly autopsied. If alive, he is imprisoned in a cell beneath the fortress and, like so many of those who pass into the hands of the Inquisition, never heard from again. In either case, the Inquisition can ascertain that the man the Acolytes took down is Caecilius Vraine, a notorious rogue psyker of mysterious origins who was active on several worlds in the Calixis Sector and who has been on the sector-wide wanted list for over twenty years. Vraine's usual modus operandi was to set himself up as the leader of a religious cult, and then to convince his victims to kill themselves after passing on all their wealth to Vraine. He has not been heard of for several years and was assumed to have died or gone to ground – in fact, he was spending this time impersonating Arch-Cardinal Ignato for the Maledictor's Hand.

As for the real Ignato, if the Acolytes found the letters in the Arch-Cardinal's Quarters they have evidence that he might have gone to the planet Stonegarden. If they did not find this evidence, shortly after the Acolytes' defeat of Vraine a ship leaving a Scintillan spaceport falls silent and disappears, after sending a garbled distress call reporting a skinless man who walked through the hull of the ship and began killing the crew with bolts of black fire. The intruder is heard demanding the bridge crew to set a course for Stonegarden before the transmission is cut off. In both cases, it seems the best place to start hunting for the real Ignato is Stonegarden.



NO PLACE TO DIE

"Burn! Burn! Burn! Burn them all! Ah ha ha haa!"

—Order given at the battle of the *Faith Beyond Reason*

The Acolytes' patron Inquisitor hurriedly orders an Inquisitorial craft, the *Cudgel of Drusus*, made available to take the Acolytes to Stonegarden. The *Cudgel of Drusus* is a Viper-class Sloop, a small but fast craft with a reputation for the accuracy of its Warp jumps, often used to take Inquisitors and their Acolytes from world to world when time is a factor. The *Cudgel of Drusus* is helmed by Captain Phinneus Calavar, a lifelong veteran of Inquisitorial missions who knows better than to ask questions about the passengers he carries or their reasons for travelling. The *Cudgel of Drusus* has a crew of about six thousand men and women and is rather spartan in its facilities, with few concessions made to comfort or leisure.

The Acolytes are closing in on the real Ignato, Ignato knows full well the Inquisition is on to him. He sends the *Faith Beyond Reason*, a voidcraft full of Redemptionists loyal to Ignato, to intercept the Acolytes' ship. The Redemptionists make their move when the *Cudgel of Drusus* pauses after a Warp jump near the uninhabited Gethayne system, to make calculations for the next jump.

The disturbed sleep and oppressive waking hours of the previous Warp jump are absent for the moment as the Cudgel of Drusus lies at anchor. The crew are taking the opportunity to perform basic maintenance and offer prayers in the ship's small chapel. Concentration is broken by Captain Calavar's voice blaring over the vox-casters.

"Contact detected! Raider-sized vessel closing fast! Battle stations! Battle stations!"

Klaxons sound all over the ship. Crewmen rush to man damage control and triage stations. The ship's engines rise in pitch as the Cudgel of Drusus starts making evasive manoeuvres.

"Brace for impact!" comes the command over the vox-caster. A moment later the ship is wracked with a crunching impact, the gravity thrown off-kilter as the shockwave ripples through the decks.

The Acolytes are thrown around by the force of the impact. Each Acolyte makes an Easy (+20) Toughness Test. Acolytes who pass are able to brace themselves for impact and are unhurt. Those who fail suffer D5+5 Impact damage to a random location as they are thrown around and struck by falling debris.

The *Cudgel of Drusus* is damaged only superficially, but the other ship, the *Faith Beyond Reason*, has rammed it and the two ships are locked together. Redemptionists on the *Faith* board the *Cudgel*, caring nothing for their own survival and fixated only on destroying the *Cudgel* and the Acolytes it carries.

CUDGEL OF DRUSUS

Hull: Raider

Class: Modified Viper-class scout sloop

Dimensions: .95 km long, .25 km abeam at fins approx.

Mass: 4.9 megatonnes approx.

Accel: 6 gravities max acceleration

Crew Complement: 7,500 crew (6,000 currently).

The *Cudgel of Drusus* was acquired by Inquisitorial mandate from the Battlefleet Calixis more than fifty years ago. Viper-class vessels are traditionally used by Battlefleet Calixis as high-speed scouts, with good communications and few weapons. This design made it appealing to the Inquisition, who uses it as a reliable and secure transport. The ship is used by the Tyrantine Cabal to move Inquisitors, Acolyte cells, and other patrons around the Calixis sector, and to transport sensitive cargoes, prisoners, and intelligence. Its crew is trained for covert operations and is used to serving without any knowledge of where they are going, what they will do when they get there, and who (or what) is going with them.

"Boarders in the starboard crew deck!" comes Captain Calavar's voice from the bridge. "Break open the weapon lockers! Armsmen to the crew deck! Get those fraggers off my ship!"

If the Acolytes do not heed Calavar's call to arms, a lone armsmen struggles past them carrying a naval shotgun.

"We've got men trapped in the cargo holds. We haven't got anyone to spare. You're supposed to be the Emperor's finest? Let's see you prove it! Follow me!"

On the crew deck there are dozens of Redemptionist Narco-Dervishes flooding in where the two ships are locked. Acrid smoke fills the air (limiting visibility to about 50m) but the multiple breaches into the void keep the smoke from building up, causing high winds filled with swirling black smog and bright flames.

If the Acolytes don't move to the crew deck to confront the boarders, then they will eventually have to deal with them as they flood the ship, looking for the Acolytes. The Narco-Dervishes move in groups of five, and the Acolytes will be confronted by a single group (either on the crew deck or later in another area). Confronting the Dervishes on the crew deck is much easier, as after five rounds of combat the nearby Captain Calavar and his unit have dispatched their targets and move to help, killing a single Narco-dervish every round.

During the battle the GM should remember that both the *Cudgel* and the *Faith* are very large ships, each at least a kilometre long. The Acolytes cannot possibly hope to repel an entire boarding action, as it involves the hundreds or even thousands of Redemptionists, Narco-Deverishes, and crewmen from the *Cudgel*.

However, what the Acolytes can do is take actions to turn the tide in the *Cudgel's* favour. A good place to start is on the crew deck. The initial boarders from the *Faith* came across in void suits and small craft. However, now they are rigging up an armoured pressure tube with a hatch from their ship into the side of the *Cudgel*, terminating in one of the main mess halls. Once the pressure tube is installed, they can flood the ship with Nacro-Dervishes (most of whom don't have pressure suits, so they can't easily get across the vacuum between the vessels by other means).

A group of Narco-Dervishes (four, plus one additional for each Acolyte) are guarding three regular crew from the *Faith Beyond Reason* as they finish locking the pressure tube in place. The regular crew do not fight, as they know their best chance is to rig up the pressure tube.

Have the crew finish rigging the tube just before they are killed or captured by the Acolytes. Once the Acolytes have finished the fight, they must move fast, as hordes of Narco-Dervishes are pouring through the tube towards them.

Simply keeping the hatch shut won't help, it's too thin to keep out chainswords for long. However, the Acolytes can toss explosives into the tube and shut the hatch (maybe even waiting until the Narco-Dervishes are very close so they're sucked into the void when the tube ruptures). A pair of krak grenades, a melta-bomb, or five or more frag grenades should do the trick. If the Acolytes have none of these, have them make a Challenging (+0) Awareness Test to notice that one of the slain crew was carrying a satchel of breaching charges.



Redemptionist Narco-Dervishes

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
39	17	38	27	39	21	32	27	24

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 7

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S), Search (Per), Speak Low Gothic (Int).

Talents: Ambidexterous, Street Fighting, Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee), Melee Training (Chain, Primitive).

Armour: None.

Weapons: Rusty Chainsword (1d10+5, Pen 0, Tearing), Ceramite Knife (1d5+3, Pen 0).

Equipment: 2 doses of Fervor in Auto-Injectors.

The Redemptionist Narco-Dervishes are frenzied zealots, more than willing to die in the service of their Emperor. They believe they are doing the Emperor's work and that all who face them are automatically blasphemers and heretics, and express this opinion vociferously as they set about their enemies with blades in a drug fuelled frenzy.

With the Redemptionists defeated, Captain Calavar and a detail of armsmen arrive, having fought off a second boarding party in the cargo hold.

"The enemy ship has us locked up. We can't break free. Their own engines are firing and it looks like they're trying to drag us into the gravity pull of Gethayne Quartus. If we don't board these K'nib-rutters sharpish and kill their engines then we'll be getting a close-up view of a planet within the half-hour. Everyone's going in, and that includes you. Time to earn your berth, Acolytes of the Emperor's Inquisition."

FERVOR

The sunward half of the tidally locked Barsapine is inhospitable to life. The high winds and heat can scorch a man to death in a matter of hours. The only life found in this region, lying deep within the ground, is a winding vine known only to a small cult of Redemptionists. The "Gifted Fervor of the God-Emperor," as they call the plant, is both an ingredient for a potent drug and a right of passage.

A devotee who wishes to prove his faith must walk into the wastelands with nothing more than a jar of water. He must return with the jar filled with the roots of the plant. Many attempting to prove their worth to the cult fail, and their bodies serve as grim markers for failure for future faithful.

The drug Fervor is distilled from the plant, taking the drug allows the cultists to move with nearly supernatural grace, as their joints and ligaments bend at unnatural angles. A Cultist under the influence of Fervor gains additional Reactions equal to their Agility Bonus. This effects last for only 1 Round, but the Auto-Injectors allow the Cultists to use the drug as a Free Action.

THE BATTLE OF THE FAITH

The forces under Captain Phinneus Calavar comprise several hundred armsmen (the remainder of the crew are needed to repair the damage to the *Cudgel* and keep it operational), Calavar himself, and the Acolytes. The Acolytes' task is to organise the armsmen in assaulting the various areas of the *Faith Beyond Reason*, using their command skills and knowledge to lead the *Cudgel of Drusus's* crew to victory. Depending on how well they lead the attack, the Acolytes can reduce the difficulty of the final encounter, the assault on the engine deck of the *Faith Beyond Reason*.

Provided the Acolytes handled themselves competently during the first boarding action, Calavar gives them command of a company of his armsmen, a hundred men, and sends them aft towards the ship's engines. He leads the remaining forces fore, towards the *Faith's* bridge. As he puts it, hopefully one team will succeed in gaining enough control of the *Faith* that they can either stop its dive into the planet, or at the very least separate it from the *Cudgel*.

To command the boarding action, the Acolytes need at least some of the following Skills: Command, Intimidate, Common Lore (War), Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis), and Medicae. Since the Acolytes are commanding a hundred troops against roughly equal sized forces, playing the boarding action as a series of combats is impractical. Instead, the GM is encouraged to run it narratively and abstractly, with the Acolytes narrating their actions and making Tests at key junctures to help advance the story.

The air on the enemy ship is foul and stale, stinking of incense and sweat. The armsmen of the Cudgel of Drusus, armed with naval shotguns, clubs, and sabres, push through the narrow corridors opened up by the enemy ship's boarding claws, their officers barking orders. Yelled prayers echo from ahead, above the droning of life support systems and the engine deck far towards the stern.

"Onwards!" yells Captain Calavar, "Press on to the engines! If they won't down with the first shot, give 'em a touch of the blade!"

Figures in red robes, unkempt and frenzied, rush to oppose the boarding. They carry chainswords and flamers, smouldering censers wielded like morningstars, and many-tailed barbed whips. The two sides clash in a brutal face-to-face melee. Confusion and carnage are everywhere, and it is only a force of will that will keep your allies going.

IGNATO'S REDEMPTION

The Redemptionists on board the *Faith Beyond Reason* originally came from the cult-like cells of religious fanatics familiar for their acts of rabble-rousing and mass arson across the sector. Ignato, however, has taken these zealots and made them his own, turning their object of veneration from the Emperor to himself. The Maledictor's Hand has often made use of Redemptionist lackeys in the past, always keeping them ignorant of their patrons' true natures, but Ignato has instead turned these maniacs into an army personally loyal to him alone. His Redemptionists are particularly fond of self-flagellation and scarification, and alter their bodies in some

cases to the point where they can no longer be recognised, to help them subsume their own personalities into tools for Ignato's use. They retain their fondness for chain weapons and flamers, if anything even more eager to mortify the flesh of the unbelievers than the average red-robed madman. For all their devotion to Ignato, Ignato himself cares nothing for their survival and it suits him perfectly for them all to die if it prevents the Acolytes from interfering with his plans.

The *Cudgel of Drusus's* boarding force consists of a hundred armsmen. They look to the Acolytes as well as their captain to lead them by giving orders and serving as an example. In this first stage of the battle, gaining a foothold, the Acolytes each make a Challenging (+0) Command, Common Lore (War), Scholastic Lore (Tactica Imperialis) or Intimidate Test to inspire their troops, direct them in sound tactics, or drive back the enemy.

This stage of the battle begins assuming that only ten armsmen survive (though many more may do so depending on the Acolytes' actions). For each Degree of Success earned in total through these Tests, ten additional armsmen survive the initial battle, to a maximum of ninety out of the hundred armsmen. No matter what, ten armsmen are killed or wounded badly enough that they can't help press the fight.

The remnants of your force push through onto a cavernous deck dominated by a holo-image two stories high. This image is of a figure in cardinal's robes, in the act of blessing the congregation of cultists kneeling before it in their dozens. The holo-image is of a man with no skin, his lidless eyes wide and staring, white teeth gleaming between the muscles of his face.

"Though the enemy is amongst us," rallies the holo-image, "our faith shall not tire. No, we shall see it grow! In the flames of conflict the Emperor's will is made manifest!"

The cultists turn to face the attacking armsmen. With the whips and cudgels with which they flagellate their own flesh, they rush to attack the invaders. The holo-image looks on, preaching all the while as the bodies start to pile up.

In this stage of the battle, the Acolytes can take a more direct hand. Each makes one Test of their choice: a Challenging (+0) Ballistic Skill, Weapon Skill, Common Lore (War), Medicae, or Command Test to inspire the armsmen or lead them by example. In this battle, it is assumed that no armsmen survive. However, ten armsmen survive the battle's second phase for every Degree of Success the Acolytes gain in these Tests, to a maximum of eighty (at least ten die or are wounded no matter what the Acolytes do).

Finally, you reach the engine decks, several stories of greasy black iron choked with chemical fumes and slick with spilled coolants. The plasma reactors shudder and roar up ahead, pumping power into the main engines.

Suddenly, over the sound of the reactors, you hear the massive, measured, thuds of immense footsteps. From between two of the reactor stacks steps a contraption of steel and blades, with a human form strapped and manacled to the front of it. The figure's head is obscured by a metal helm from which run cables and pipes into the cylindrical body of the machine. The machine careens towards you, saw blades screaming and guns hammering.

A Routine (+20) Common Lore (Ecclesiarchy) Test lets an Acolyte recognise this contraption as a Penitent Engine. These engines are similar to combat-servitors, but are controlled by the minds of sinners who have been condemned to serve in a capacity useful to the Imperial Church. Their minds are encased in helms that feed them endless images of war, violence, religious ecstasy, and exhortations to battle. The heretic's need for forgiveness drives the engine into a frenzy of destruction whenever it is confronted with the Emperor's foes. Penitent Engines are holy objects in their own right and the Redemptionists on the *Faith Beyond Reason* have anointed it with sacred machine unguents and festooned it with prayer-parchments and purity seals. Ignato's Ecclesiarchy contacts gained him the use of this device, and he is perfectly willing to sacrifice it to see the Acolytes prevented from reaching Stonegarden.

There are dozens of Redemptionists on this deck as well. If the Acolytes have any armsmen remaining in their force, these armsmen engage the flagellants and Redemptionist cultists elsewhere on the engine deck. If all the armsmen have been lost in the battle's earlier two phases, the Acolytes must face not only the Penitent Engine defending the reactors, but also the cultists. Two Narco-Dervishes arrive every round, attacking the Acolytes until they are dead, or the Penitent Engine is destroyed.

If there are at least twenty armsmen remaining at this point, half help the Acolytes take down the Penitent Engine. It's important that they not overshadow the Acolytes' efforts, but their presence means that the Penitent Engine alternates its attacks, every other round attacking armsmen, not Acolytes. In addition, one Acolyte can make a Challenging (+0) Command Test each round. Success means he directs the weapon fire of the remaining armsmen, and destroys one of the Heavy Flamers. The GM should make it clear to the players that this is an option, perhaps by having the armsmen ask the Acolytes whether they should focus fire on the flame weapons.

Penitent Engine



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
40	40	(10) 55	(10) 50	35	20	20	40	--

Movement: 8/16/24/48 **Wounds:** 30

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Basic Weapon Training (Flame), Berserk Charge, Cleanse and Purify, Die Hard, Fearless, Hardy, Heavy Weapon Training (Flame), Iron Jaw, Melee Weapon Training (Chain), Two-Weapon Wielder (Ballistic), Two-Weapon Wielder (Melee).

Traits: Armour Plating, Auto-Stabilised, Dark Sight, Fear 1, Machine (5), Size (Hulking), Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2), Unnatural Speed.

Armour (Machine): All 7.

Weapons: Unarmed (1d5+7; Primitive) and the following in each arm: Chain Axe (1d10+14 R; Pen 3; Tearing), Heavy Flamer (30m; S/-/-; 2d10+4 E; Pen 4; Clip 10; Rld Full; Flame).

Gear: Internal micro-bead (to receive/relay instructions), fuel tanks equivalent to three clips for each Heavy Flamer, targeting system (counts as red dot laser sight).

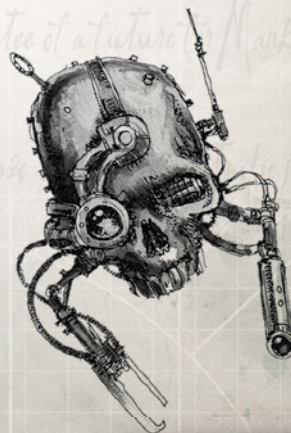
Once the guardians on the engine deck are dealt with, the Acolytes and their allies are free to shut down the engines. Engineers from the *Cudgel of Drusus* can do this, or the Acolytes can disconnect the power conduits between the plasma reactors and the engines with an Ordinary (+10) Tech-Use Test or by simply opening fire on parts of the ship that look important and fragile.

Once the engines have been shut down, the *Cudgel of Drusus* is in no more danger of being dragged into the gravitational pull of Gethayne Quartus. It takes several hours for the *Cudgel's* engineers to disengage the *Faith Beyond Reason* from the ship and prepare the *Cudgel* for its next Warp jump. During that time the Acolytes can search the *Faith Beyond Reason*. It is an escort-sized ship slightly larger than the *Cudgel*, refitted in a similar way to the pirate craft that sometimes plague the Calixis Sector, and while not heavily armed it has been given a strengthened prow and boarding claws to facilitate ramming and boarding other ships.

The holo-image projected in the Flagellation Chamber is a recording, not a transmission, of a sermon made by Ignato recently, and it loops over and over. It describes the mission of the *Faith Beyond Reason* – to intercept the *Cudgel of Drusus* and kill the unbelievers within. These unbelievers seek to prevent Arch-Cardinal Ignato's plan, and as he has taught the branch of the Redemption that serves him that there is no greater sin than defying him.

The *Faith's* armoury contains a great many Common Craftsmanship shotguns, autopistols, and chainswords, which the Acolytes are free to take if they wish. If the Acolytes do not think to raid the Armoury, then a nearby Sergeant will ask permission of the Acolytes to raid the Armoury for his men (and hopefully plant the idea in their heads as well).

The ship's stores have mundane goods like ship's rations and maintenance gear, and the ill-appointed sick bay has nothing of use save a few basic implements and dressings. An Acolyte who passes a **Difficult (-10) Search Test** locates a hidden compartment along the ventral hull, similar to those used by smugglers, in which the Redemptionists have hidden a relic given to them by Ignato to remind them of their duties to him – a piece of wood, the grain of which has formed a pattern resembling the face of the Emperor. Though it has no intrinsic power of its own, it can be revealed by an Acolyte during combat with Redemptionists (including those on Stonegarden later). When it is revealed, all Redemptionists present take -10 to all Tests for a turn as they struggle to overcome the shock of seeing the relic in heretical hands.



LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

"Welcome to the end of sin. The end of corruption. The end of all things impure. Welcome to the end of the Calixis Sector."

—Arch-Cardinal Ignato

The world of Stonegarden looks as grey and quiet as the grave. And it is as a grave it serves – the grave of Saint Drusus, the patron of this shrine world and of the whole Calixis Sector. Normally pilgrim ships must lay at anchor for months, even years, before they are cleared to land here, but as soon as you enter orbit the *Cudgel of Drusus* is bombarded with transmissions. Contact has been lost with the Tomb of Saint Drusus amid reports of multiple small ships landing nearby without clearance. Permission is immediately granted for the *Cudgel of Drusus* to land its shuttles at the small voidport near the tomb.

No one greets you at the voidport. Ahead of you, the grand stone arch of Pilgrim's Gate looks on to the tomb itself, a complex of ancient buildings whose grey stone makes them grim and oppressive in spite of their heavy ornamentation. The gate's huge riveted wooden doors hang open and bodies lie scattered around in bloodstained pilgrims' robes, piled up by the gate or lying spread-eagled on the landing pad. Signs of a gunfight are everywhere, from bullet holes in the gates to a pile of bodies burned beyond recognition and wreathed in the familiar smell of promethium.



SAINT DRUSUS

The exact story of Saint Drusus' life is impossible to assemble with any authority, such is the number of parables and deeds attributed to him. One of the few certain facts is that he was one of the generals of Lord Angevin during the conquest of the Calixis Sector, and that Drusus was instrumental in the Sector's conquest and remained to govern it. After death, he became a spiritual figurehead and was canonised. The intervening period, during which Drusus is said to have walked the Calixis Sector righting wrongs, spreading the authority of the Imperial Church, performing miracles, and smiting heretics, is remembered in a body of tales of such variety and mutual incompatibility that some wonder if there ever was a single Saint Drusus at all. The canonical law is that all church-approved miracles and deeds were performed by a single man, but many of them are attributed to other saints or historical figures as well, or were performed long after Drusus' supposed death (or before Angevin ever arrived). Trying to understand Saint Drusus as a man is a maddeningly frustrating and ultimately futile exercise, for he is as much a receptacle for the Calixis Sector's religious hopes and desperation as he was ever a real individual.

Ignato has arrived shortly before the Acolytes. His Redemptionists have taken over the tomb complex where Saint Drusus lies interred. Ignato himself is in the tomb's inner circle, enacting foul daemonic rituals before the saint's sarcophagus, while his Redemptionist minions ransack the outer chambers of the tomb. Redemptionist squads are patrolling the area, and soon they approach the Pilgrim's Gate to investigate the shuttle landings.

From the distance, across dunes of stones and ash, appears a group of several dozen Redemptionists, robed and armed much like the troops on the Faith Beyond Reason.

"Man the walls!" yells Captain Calavar, and his armymen rush to take up firing positions. "Fear not," he says, turning to you, "We'll hold these dogs off. You take the tomb."

A gunfight between the Redemptionists and Calavar's armymen breaks out as the Acolytes pass through the Pilgrim's Gate. There is no going back now, and the Acolytes are on their own.

THE GATES OF PURITY

The Tomb of Saint Drusus consists of the Sarcophagus Chambers in the centre, surrounded by the Gates of Purity. The Gates ensure that only the pure and faithful may enter the view the Sarcophagus. Ignato, having known beforehand of the trial of the Gates, is now sealed in the Sarcophagus Chambers alone. If the Acolytes want to follow him they will have to contend with his Redemptionist followers while completing the trials themselves.

THE TONGUE OF FLAME

A stone lectern overlooks several rows of pews in this chamber, the walls of which are painted with murals depicting scenes from Saint Drusus' life. The smell of burned meat assails your nostrils. At the foot of the lectern is a pile of eight or nine charred bodies. On the wall behind the lectern are inscribed the words "THE PIOUS TONGUE FEARS NOT THE FLAME." On the lectern lies open a huge book with a silver-plated cover.

Behind the lectern, a massive vault door stands closed.

The trial in this chamber requires the pilgrims to read from the book. The book itself is a valuable relic, The Word of Saint Eugenios the Incandescent. So furious was the passion with which he penned his work that anyone reading aloud from it is liable to suffer terrible burns as the very words ignite in his mouth. Only the most pious or strong-willed can read from the Word without incurring injury. Reading from it is required of anyone wishing to enter the Sarcophagus Chambers, either to earn their place through suffering, or by demonstrating the strength of their faith by reading it unharmed.

A cogitator built into the lectern responds to the sound pattern of the book's words being read aloud. When it detects a passage from the book, a quill emerges on a robotic arm from the lectern and, with a series of painful but brief laser pulses, inscribes the first part of the code-brand onto the reader's forearm. The charred bodies are of Redemptionists ordered to read aloud from the book by Ignato, and who were killed by the resultant flames before one of them was successful and Ignato received the brand from the lectern cogitator.

An Acolyte reading from the book makes a Very Easy (+30) Toughness or Willpower Test. This Test becomes one degree more difficult for every 10 Corruption Points the Acolyte possesses. If the Acolyte passes, he reads a prayer from the book with no ill effects, although he can feel the heat of Saint Eugenios' passionate words as he speaks them. If the Test is failed, the Acolyte suffers 1D10+2 Energy damage to the head, with no reduction for armour (although Toughness reduces this as normal), and flames burst from his lips and scorch his face and mouth. For every Degree of Success on his Test, however, he permanently loses 1 Corruption Point as the words scour his soul clean.

If he survives, the door opens to the inner chambers. However, only one Acolyte may pass through into the inner chambers at a time. If an Acolyte tries to pass without undergoing the Trial of Purity, he is thrown across the chamber with violent force, taking 1 level of Fatigue.

As the Acolyte passes into the inner chamber, his mind is assailed with images of war, violence, pain, and death.

A great hill on a barren world is covered in pyres, a sinner tied to a stake in the centre of each. As one, their pyres burst into flame and a thousand sinners scream as their flesh begins to burn.

A horde of foul daemons, creatures of ever-shifting forms covered in bladed limbs and fanged mouths, swarms like a living tide. Saint Drusus stands in the heart of the horde, swinging a silver mace. Daemons explode in silver fire wherever he smites them.

A pilgrim kneels before you, beaming with happiness to be in your sacred presence. She continues smiling as the flesh of her hands withers and flakes away, then her arms, then her face, and she dissolves into ash with the same smile of serenity on what remains of her lips.

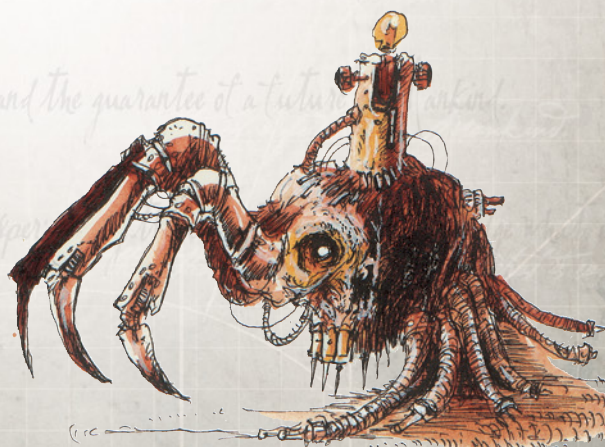
A city burns and fleeing citizens stampede through the streets. The sky darkens, a vast horned shadow rising from the horizon to blot out the sky. As blackness falls, the screams grow louder.

Deep below the ground, in infernal heat, xenos torturers work with their instruments on the naked form of saint Drusus, chained to an anvil of red-hot iron. "Do your work!" cries Drusus as they mortify his flesh, "Pain is but the absence of faith in adversity. Your torments mean nothing when faith yet remains!"

The few seconds the experience lasts seems like much longer for the one undergoing it. The Acolyte must make a Challenging (+0) Willpower Test. If this Test is passed, the Acolyte suffers no ill effects save the occasional flashback. If the Test is failed, the Acolyte suffers 1 Insanity Point, plus one additional Insanity Point per Degree of Failure due to the debilitating and confusing effect of the mental assault. Pilgrims who gain mental disorders after the experience often believe that they are connected to Saint Drusus, imagining they are suffering his wounds or that they possess his powers, or even that they are Saint Drusus himself.

RAISING THE STAKES (ASCENSION)

If the Acolytes are above Rank 7, then increase the difficulty of every Test by three steps. In addition, any Throne Agent who gains insanity from the assault on their mind gains 1d10 Insanity, plus one Insanity for each Degree of Failure..





SARCOPHAGUS CHAMBER ENTRANCE CORRIDOR

The foul stench that billows from the interior of the tomb complex is as grave a warning as you could receive. Carried on the air are rot and death, fresh blood and old magic, incense and spoiled meat. The corridor in front of you is deformed with fleshy veins running along the walls, the very stone blistered up by pendulous growths and pulsating cysts. Dark slime weeps from the walls and ceiling, and the floor is spongy as if the stone slabs were becoming like skin. The Warp's work has been done here and the interior of the tomb complex has been changed as a result, surely a symptom of an open wound running from Realspace into the depths of the Warp. Up ahead you can hear the sound of low laughing, a human voice echoed by another deeper, rumbling tone.

The Sarcophagus Chambers have been deformed beyond recognition by Ignato's magic. Ignato has summoned daemons here to protect him and to assist in the ritual that forms the key part of his plan. Ignato waits in a chamber up ahead, once a reliquary displaying items from Drusus' life, now a festering cyst of dark magic. This ritual has already summoned the Dei-Phage, a daemon the Acolytes may have faced at the Haematite Cathedral, drawn back from banishment by Ignato to repent for its failure at the Acolytes' hands. The Acolytes will not face the Dei-Phage again here, for it has already fulfilled its purpose – possessing the corpse of Saint Drusus.

The corridor ahead of the Acolytes is just the first part of a grisly daemonic gauntlet the Acolytes have to run before facing Ignato and discovering the truth of his monstrous plan to resurrect Saint Drusus and use him to start a religious war.

As the Acolytes walk down the corridor, cysts and veins burst and spray them with stinking pus and gore. This horrible experience is also dangerous, for the substances carry psychoactive agents. Acolytes exposed to the shower of filth, either through the substances contacting bare skin or from being breathed in, must make an Ordinary (+10) Toughness or Carouse Test. Those who pass suffer no ill effects. Those who fail feel something writhing within them, like the tendrils of dozens of worms squirming around their organs. This nauseating experience causes them to gain 1 Insanity Point and 1 Corruption Point. If the Test was failed by four degrees or more the Acolyte gains D5 Insanity Points and D5 Corruption Points instead.

The corridor turns a corner and reaches the final anti-chamber before the Sarcophagus Room, the Pool of Tears.

THE POOL OF TEARS

A large rectangular pool fills most of this room. Its waters are clouded and dark, though it does not appear deep. Statues of pilgrims kneel at intervals around the pool's edge, heads bowed towards the surface, many with their hands across their eyes or against their face as if in distress or sorrow. Fleishy orifices have opened up in the walls, drooling greyish body fluids that run down drainage channels cut into the marble floor. Another door stands open at the far end of the room.

A Challenging (+0) Common Lore (Ecclesiarchy) Test recalls that this pool is said to be filled with the tears of pilgrims who have been moved to weeping after standing in the presence of Saint Drusus' tomb. Now the accumulated sorrow has taken on a sinister life of its own under the influence of Ignato's magic, and it poses a grave psychological danger. When the Acolytes move more than halfway across this room towards the far door, the water ripples and an indistinct form rises from the pool.

A shimmering, psychic figure rises from the surface of the pool, roiling like caged smoke, with two glowing points for eyes. It points a spectral finger at you.

"Join me," it says, in a voice like music. "Join me in sorrow! Weep with me!"

Each Acolyte then sees the shape take on a different form. A selection of forms are given below but they can be changed to reflect NPCs important to individual Acolytes, such as loved ones, rivals, or mentors, or even deceased Acolytes. When this is done, the choice should be one that elicits an emotion from the Acolyte, such as anger or sorrow. The exact form should be written down and handed to each Acolyte's player in the form of a note.

- The Acolyte's patron Inquisitor.
- A dead foe from a previous adventure.
- Caecilius Vrain, the wounds inflicted by the Acolytes glowing on his body.
- Exorcist Amortus, his hands covered in blood.
- Saint Drusus, maggots writhing in his undead flesh.
- A tall, pale woman in a tattered ball gown, her hair unkempt and a bloody knife in her hands.
- A human without skin, the robes of a priest draped around his bloody frame.
- A Space Marine in full power armour, spattered with gore and festooned with freshly-taken skulls.

This apparition has no attacks of its own, but uses those of the Acolytes against it. If any Acolyte attacks the apparition, the apparition uses the same attack against the Acolyte on his own turn, with the Acolyte's Weapon or Ballistic Skill. The weapon used to make the attack appears momentarily in the apparition's hand. If it is attacked by several Acolytes, it attacks several times in the same turn and on the same initiative count. The apparition prefers to remain in the pool but can move from place to place if the Acolytes leave the room.

If an Acolyte studies the apparition, a Challenging (+0) Search or Scrutiny Test, or a Routine (+20) Psyniscience Test, reveals that the figure seems to shift between numerous forms every few seconds, flickering just long enough for the eye to register various faces, body shapes and modes of dress. The Acolyte is somehow sure that the figure is not what it seems, and that it is shaped not by reality but by the Acolytes' own perceptions. Acolytes can come to a similar conclusion if they tell one another what they see when they look at the figure, and realise that it is different for each of them.

Acolytes can cause the apparition to disappear for them with a Challenging (+0) Willpower Test as a half-action. When an Acolyte succeeds, the figure becomes a wispy, spectral form that, while immune to damage, can no longer attack the Acolyte. Once all the Acolytes have made this Willpower Test the apparition dissolves away into nothing, and does not return.

Acolytes who manage to best this task know are filled with tranquillity. The Pool of Tears is indeed a test, and by resisting this apparition they have proven themselves worthy. An Acolyte knows that the waters are indeed miraculous. He may choose to drink a single sip from the water, restoring 2d10 wounds and a spent Fate Point. Alternatively, the Acolyte may sprinkle a weapon with the water, causing it to gain the Sanctified trait for 1d10 hours. After the Acolyte takes even a little water from the pool it will have no additional effects for him.

The door at the farthest end of this room leads into the Ritual Chamber.



RITUAL CHAMBER

This great dome sits at the heart of the tomb complex, and the influence of the Warp has turned it into a scene of horror. The walls are covered in writhing limbs and tormented faces, spasming hands scattering a thin drizzle of blood. The faces are contorted in screams but the only sound that emits is a hissing and sighing, as if the breath of all those sacrificed to make this place possible were being robbed from their throats. The floor is covered with hands, too, forming a quagmire of ensnaring limbs. The soaring curves of the dome were once decorated with frescoes depicting the apotheosis of Saint Drusus but only fragments of the paintings remain, the rest of the dome disfigured by the hanging fluid-filled organs and blood-red tendrils hanging overhead.

In the centre of the room kneels a figure without any skin. The wet red muscle groups slide past one another as he turns to face you. His eyes, unblinkingly lidless, fixate you with a piercing green gaze.

"You are too late," he says. "For hundreds of years I have planned this moment. For hundreds of years I crafted the persona of Ignato and sought to elevate him to Arch-Cardinal. Even the rest of the Maledictor's Hand could not stop me, and neither could you. The events I have set in motion will see the Calixis Sector burn and all its sinners along with it. And the first to the pyre will be you."

In this chamber Arch-Cardinal Ignato has performed his foul daemonic magic, and he is prepared to do so again to kill the Acolytes. Ignato has no intention of dying or surrendering, intent as he is on being around to witness the bedlam he has created befall the Calixis Sector. He fights to the death, and calls on his daemonic allies to help him.

ARCH-CARDINAL IGNATO

Ignato is utterly insane, completely unshakeable in the certainty that he is right, and willing to go to any lengths to bring about chaos and destruction in the Calixis Sector. His mania is such that he cares more for seeing his plans come to fruition than the ultimate goal of the Maledictor's Hand, to see sin and depravity excised from the Calixis Sector.

Ignato was a founding member of the Hand and, in tandem with his career as a priest in the Ecclesiarchy, he was charged with the Hand to foster an alliance with the powers of the Warp. The Hand believed that only the Warp had the power to achieve their goals, and Ignato was their ambassador to the Dark Powers. Whether Ignato was mad before he gazed into the abyss, or whether it was his communions with the daemonic that drove him insane, none can say. But by the time he reached the position of Arch-Cardinal, he was consumed by an obsession with bringing carnage on a vast scale to the Calixis Sector, with the assistance of the Warp's daemonic inhabitants.

Perhaps the Dark Gods control him now, whispering in his ear, tempting visions of stars drenched with blood and planets afire with war. Or maybe it is just comforting to think that Ignato's heinous plan originated not with himself, but through the influence of the Warp. Certainly, knowing that a mere man is capable of what he is doing evokes a very human kind of horror.

Acolytes are hindered in this combat by the grasping hands that cover the floor. An Acolyte who wishes to move must first pass a Routine (+20) Strength Test, or be held fast by hands grabbing his feet and ankles. Ignato and any daemons he summons do not suffer from the grasping hands.



The True Ignato



WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
52	44	36	(8) 42	36	54	42	63	48

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 26

Skills: Awareness +10, Charm +20, Ciphers (Occult) +20, Command +20, Common Lore (Ecclesiarchy) +20, Common Lore (Imperial Creed) +20, Common Lore (Imperium), Deceive +10, Disguise +10, Dodge, Forbidden Lore (Heresy), Forbidden Lore (Daemons, Warp) +10, Invocation, Literacy +20, Logic, Scholastic Lore (Imperial Creed) +20.

Talents: Air of Authority, Dark Soul, Die Hard, Fearless, Insanely Faithful, Into the Jaws of Hell, Master Orator, Paranoia, Resistance (Psychic Powers), Strong-minded, Unshakeable Faith.

Traits: Flames of Desecration*, Sweeping Strikes**, Unnatural Toughness (x2), Voice of the Damned***.

***Flames of Desecration:** Ignato is imbued with barely contained Warp energy. He may manifest this fire as a Ranged Weapon with the following profile: (50m, S/-/-, 1d10+5 E, Pen 3, Tearing). In addition the energy hardens his form, allowing his melee attacks to have the following profile (1d10+5 E, Pen 4, Power Field).

****Sweeping Strikes:** Ignato can lash out with his flame-covered arms in sweeping attacks. As a Full Action, he may make a melee attack against every target engaged with him in melee.

*****Voice of the Damned:** Ignato may call to the daemons of the Warp, weakening the barrier and allowing hundreds of harpies to scratch through reality at all the uncorrupted nearby. As a Full Action Ignato may force every Acolyte to succeed in a Challenging (+0) Agility or Willpower Test (Acolyte's choice) or suffer 2d10 damage ignoring armour but not Toughness Bonus. However, reduce the damage by the number of Corruption Points an Acolyte possesses.

Ignato is vociferous about his delight at the approaching fate of the Calixis Sector, and sprinkles his attacks with threats, predictions, and gloating:

- "You should think yourselves accursed you shall not be there to see it! A thousand worlds will blossom in flame! A trillion sinners will howl in anguish!"
- "Saint Drusus founded this sector, and we will see to it that he is the one to destroy it!"
- "Think on it, oh blasphemers. How else can strength be bred, but through suffering? Where does the preservation of the human race lie, but through the catastrophe I have created?"
- "The Emperor has forsaken His people. We must take up His mantle. We must remake humanity if it is to survive."

When Ignato is killed or subdued, any summoned daemons are banished screaming back to the Warp. The limbs and faces embedded in the walls and floor shrivel rapidly, first their skin sloughing off into dust, then their bones crumbling into a drift of ash that shifts this way and that in the wind that blows through the holes newly opened up in the dome. The removal of the limbs and faces reveals a second doorway in the dome, one with High Gothic prayers of protection and purity inscribed around it. This door leads to the Sarcophagus of Saint Drusus.

THE SARCOPHAGUS OF SAINT DRUSUS

In spite of the Warp's dark influence, in spite of all the worst efforts of Ignato, some holiness still remains in this cool chamber of marble and jade. Candles still flicker on the walls, casting shifting shadows. In the centre of the room stands a grand coffin of carved jade, on the lid of which is a carving of Saint Drusus in the full garb of a warrior-cleric. The coffin's lid is fractured and has partially slid off the coffin. Directly above the coffin is a hole in the ceiling that looks like it was smashed from the inside. A few blue feathers float down slowly, landing on the jade coffin or circling in the incense-heavy air.

The coffin of Saint Drusus is empty. Drusus' body, and the wargear with which he was buried, are gone. You can see that the hole above you travels through the stone of the tomb-complex's construction all the way to the open air of Stonegarden.

On the floor beside the coffin lies a sheet of parchment, upon which is written the contract that Ignato used to summon and bind the Dei-Phage daemon to his service. This contract indicates to the Acolytes that the Dei-Phage (which they may have banished on Barsapine in **THE BLACK SEPULCHRE**) has returned from its banishment to the Warp. The Dei-Phage is in possession of Saint Drusus' body, the consequences of which are potentially devastating to the whole Calixis Sector, the details of which will be revealed in the next and final chapter of **THE APOSTASY GAMBIT TRILOGY**.



AN ALTERNATIVE TO BEDLAM

The revelations that Arch-Cardinal Ignato is a daemonologist, and that Saint Drusus' corpse has been possessed and is at large, are major changes to the Calixis Sector. These changes lead to parts of the Calixis Sector being devastated and, further, lead on to the events of *The Chaos Commandment*, the final part of the **APOSTASY GAMBIT TRILOGY**. However, if GMs do not wish to do this level of violence to the status quo of their campaigns, the climax of **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** can lead to different revelations. It is possible that the Inquisition covers up Ignato's crimes with the complicity of the Ecclesiarchy, so the citizens of the Calixis Sector believe their Arch-Cardinal died of natural causes. Saint Drusus' missing corpse requires more explanation.

Firstly, the Acolytes can find that Saint Drusus' coffin still contains the saint's corpse. In this case Ignato's plan to summon the Dei-Phage was interrupted by their arrival, and the Acolytes have successfully thwarted the mad Arch-Cardinal's monstrous plan.

Alternatively, the corpse might be gone, but for a different purpose. Instead of being possessed by the Dei-Phage, the corpse has been spirited away by Ignato's magic to a Maledictor's Hand stronghold, where other hand members loyal to Ignato plan to create relics from Drusus' bones tainted by daemoniac magic. Such tainted relics have the potential to corrupt the congregations who venerate them, creating pockets of heretical activity that will surely lead to a mass purge of the Ecclesiarchy's ranks and the religious strife the Maledictor's Hand seeks. The Inquisition's task is now to track down all the parts of Saint Drusus' stolen corpse before they are accepted as relics of the Imperial Creed.

Finally, the disappearance of Saint Drusus' body could also be covered up by the Inquisition and Ecclesiarchy. This is a risky strategy since there is no way of knowing whether Saint Drusus will turn up again, but it at least delays the inevitable religious panic that will result from the corpse's disappearance. Game Masters who use this option can still run a party of Acolytes through the events of **THE CHAOS COMMANDMENT**, but with an intervening period during which their Acolytes can conduct investigations against the backdrop of a sector not yet altered by Ignato's actions.

AFTERMATH

With Ignato dead and evidence of his plan in Inquisitorial hands, the Acolytes' task has finished. The tomb-complex is rapidly brought back under control by the authorities of Stonegarden, but it is too late to stop Ignato from using the Dei-Phage to possess the corpse of Saint Drusus, and there is no trace of the possessed saint on Stonegarden or in its orbit. The hunt for the Dei-Phage and the saint will have to wait for further developments, although the Acolytes' patron Inquisitor is sure to mobilise other cells to search for evidence of the saint's location.

Future adventures can easily spin out of **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED**. The hunt for Saint Drusus will be covered in a future adventure, allowing the Acolytes to face the threat that emerged during the showdown on Stonegarden. Even before Saint Drusus surfaces, the events on Stonegarden, coupled with the already dire prophecies about the Tyrant Star, create a situation of religious dread in the Calixis Sector with cult activity, mass insanity and social upheaval soaring in frequency. Acolytes' investigations can easily be complicated by the sense of paranoia and foreboding that sweeps across the sector's citizens.

Acolytes might also take part in reclaiming the Cathedral of Illumination, which is still besieged or perhaps destroyed and is surely the target of relic-hunters or even Chaos cultists hunting for holy objects to debase in their rituals. Furthermore, the Calixis Sector needs a new Arch-Cardinal. The Acolytes might be charged with ensuring that a candidate preferred by the Inquisition (or at least, the Acolytes' Inquisitor) be chosen by the complicated and arcane election process conducted by the sector's Cardinals.

THE REMNANTS OF THE HAND

The Maledictor's Hand suffered a severe blow with the death or capture of Caecilius Vraine and the loss of the Arch-Cardinal's role. However, the Maledictor's Hand still exists and its members and lackeys still pose a threat to the Calixis Sector. Evidence recovered from the Cathedral of Illumination, the *Faith Beyond Reason*, or the tomb-complex on Stonegarden might provide a link to other members of the Hand. The Hand's leadership has members in high places and though Vraine's plot was foiled, they doubtless have other plans they can put in to action to create religious strife in the Calixis Sector. The events of **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** have illustrated how dangerous the Maledictor's Hand can be, and the Inquisitors of the Calixis Sector are sure to want the threat eliminated (or maybe even usurped for an Inquisitor's own ends).

EXPERIENCE AND DOWNTIME

The Acolytes have born witness to the greatest tragedy to ever befall the Calixis sector. One of the Sectors greatest Saints has been resurrected by foul daemoniac sorcery.

Experience Earned: Each player should earn at least 500 xp. If you are using the detail-based experience method, use the following.

Experience Earned:

- Base: 100 xp
- Entered the Cathedral without killing any loyal Imperial subjects: 100 xp
- Defeated Vraine: 100xp
- Repelled the boarding party: 100xp
- Successfully shut down the *Faith Beyond Reason's* Engines
- At least 20 crewmen under the Acolytes command survived the battle: 100xp
- Defeated the real Arch-Cardinal Ignato: 200xp

HAND OUT 1: INQUISITOR'S ORDERS

	
Authorization:	Thought of the Day
Episolon 443.M38 Sub-Calixian Cipher 443. Famulous-Transmission	The faithful man does not face danger alone. He has the God-Emperor at this side

My Faithful Acolytes,

To the attention of the Emperor's Inquisition have come certain facts concerning Arch-Cardinal Ignato that causes us to be suspicious of this exalted member of the Ecclesiarchy. In other circumstances such suspicions would be sufficient cause to see Ignato arrested or executed under Inquisitorial authority, but given the peerless status that the Arch-Cardinal holds in the Calixis Sector, even the Emperor's Inquisition hurries not to condemn him publicly. Though the authority of the Holy Ordos is infinite in theory, powerful enemies in the Ecclesiarchy have the capacity to greatly hinder our work should Ignato be prosecuted and his guilt not be proven.

Your task is to infiltrate the Cathedral of Illumination, Arch-Cardinal Ignato's seat of power, and there gather evidence that might support the suspicions we have of him. To facilitate this it has been arranged for you to be received by the cathedral's clergy as inspectors of relics, there to examine the various religious items and ascertain their veracity. You are to use the access this cover gives you to find out everything you can about Ignato and any other suspicious activity at the cathedral.

Should you discover evidence of malfeasance on Ignato's part, you are to report back to me. On no account are you to confront Ignato directly without express orders from myself. Until such time as I inform you otherwise, your mission concerns only the gathering of evidence.

These orders are to be obeyed as if they came from the mouth of the Emperor Himself. Seek not riches, nor praise, but only the knowledge that you do the Emperor's work.

By the authority of Him On Earth,

HAND OUT 2: SUSPICIOUS TRANSMISSION

+++...course, secrecy is of the utmost importance. Should any leaks occur, on your head they shall be, and we all will suffer...+++

+++...understand. You may place your trust in me. As for the other matter, it is fully under my control and he will never see the light while I yet live. This should be considered temporary and I urge you to create an alternative method of restricting his...+++

+++...concerns are noted. At this time our resources are diverted elsewhere. We place our trust in you, brother, to maintain both the current operation and the interdiction of our wayward brother's...+++

+++...is complete and continues as planned. Within three months I anticipate the next stage can begin. I trust all the other members of our synod concur that my current enterprise is indeed the plan most likely to...+++

+++...should further oversight be required. It behooves us to ensure that should any problem occur, our other members can have full access to your facilities so your progress can be ascertained. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that...+++

+++...insist, the means of entry requires the following code-symbols: the Open Hand, the Crescent Moon, and the Shattered Skull, input in that sequence. I must insist that any interaction between this facility and our other members or proxies be kept to a minimum. You know as well as I that...+++

BROTHER VRINE,

I FEAR THAT IGNATO IS OUT OF CONTROL. THE PLAN HE PUT TO THE HAND'S SYNOD WAS ABOMINABLE. I KNOW THAT WE MUST MAKE SACRIFICES, THAT WE MUST DO THINGS THAT THOSE OF LESSER WILLS WOULD CONSIDER EVIL. BUT WHAT IGNATO PROPOSES... IT IS MONSTROUS. WE CANNOT COUNTENANCE IT.

HE MUST BE DEALT WITH. OF COURSE, HAVING ONE OF OUR MEMBERS IN THE POSITION OF ARCH-CARDINAL IS TOO VALUABLE TO THROW AWAY. I UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR PARTICULAR CAPABILITIES WILL MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO TAKE IGNATO'S PLACE AS THE ARCH-CARDINAL. I SUGGEST THIS BE DONE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND THAT YOU BEGIN PREPARING YOURSELF BOTH TO TAKE ON IGNATO'S PHYSICAL ASPECTS AND LEARN THE NECESSARY DETAILS OF THE ARCH-CARDINAL'S MUNDANE RESPONSIBILITIES.

I AM OF THE OPINION THAT IGNATO MUST DIE. OTHERS, HOWEVER, BELIEVE THAT HE SHOULD INSTEAD BE IMPRISONED, FOR HIS STATUS WITH OUR ALLIES AND HIS CAPACITY TO CONTACT THEM ARE ESSENTIAL TO SOME OF OUR FUTURE PLANS. I SUGGEST THAT IMPRISONMENT BE OUR FIRST CHOICE, WITH THE CAVEAT THAT IGNATO BE KILLED AT THE FIRST SUGGESTION HE CAN ESCAPE OR IS ABLE TO PURSUE HIS AGENDA IN CAPTIVITY.

BROTHER VRINE. PRAY THAT

MY BRETHREN OF THE SECRET SYNOD,

MY POSITION AS ARCH-CARDINAL HAS SERVED WELL TO EXPLORE POTENTIAL OPERATIONS FOR US, WHICH MIGHT BRING ABOUT OUR DESIRED OUTCOME OF RELIGIOUS STRIFE. I HAVE IN MY POSSESSION, THANKS TO THE CATHEDRAL ARCHIVES, A GREAT MANY OF THE RAW MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR PRODUCING CONVINCING FALSE RELIGIOUS TOMES. IN ADDITION, USING OUR RESOURCES I HAVE ACQUIRED THE SERVICES OF THE MOST TALENTED FORGER IN THE SECTOR.

I BELIEVE THAT WE CAN CREATE A NUMBER OF RELIGIOUS WORKS PURPORTING TO BE WRITTEN BY, OR TRANSCRIBED FROM THE WORDS OF, SAINT DRUSUS HIMSELF. IF THE MESSAGES OF THESE WORKS WERE TAILORED TOWARDS CREATING THE UPHEAVAL WE SEEK, WE CAN FOMENT THE SCHISM WE REQUIRE AND OUR GOALS CAN BE ACHIEVED WITH RELATIVELY LITTLE DANGER TO THE MALEDICTOR'S HAND ITSELF. I HAVE BEGUN TO CREATE THESE FALSE TOMES AS I WRITE, AND REQUIRE ONLY A LITTLE MORE TIME AND THE APPROVAL OF YOU, MY BRETHREN, BEFORE THIS PLAN CAN BE PUT INTO ACTION.

I BELIEVE OUR GOALS ARE NOW IN SIGHT. THE DEPRAVITY OF THE CALIXIS SECTOR WILL BE A THING OF THE PAST, AND WE SHALL RULE OVER A SHINING EXAMPLE OF PURITY AND HOLINESS FOR THE WHOLE IMPERIUM TO FOLLOW.

CALIXIS VRINE

BROTHER VRINE,

WE HAVE REVIEWED YOUR PROPOSAL AND AGREE THAT IT OFFERS BOTH AN ACCEPTABLY LOW RISK AND A HIGH CHANCE OF SUCCESS. CONTINUE YOUR OTHER DUTIES WHILE PURSUING THE PROPOSED COURSE OF ACTION. SHOULD ANY INFORMATION LEAK, IN PARTICULAR THROUGH THE FORGER OF WHOM YOU SPEAK, YOU ARE TO ELIMINATE ALL THOSE WITH ANY KNOWLEDGE, DESTROY ALL EVIDENCE, AND SEE TO IT THAT YOU DISAPPEAR. WE SUGGEST INFLECTING SOME CATASTROPHE ON THE CATHEDRAL OF ILLUMINATION THAT WILL ELIMINATE PHYSICAL EVIDENCE AND PROVIDE A COVER FOR THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE ARCH-CARDINAL.

WE REMIND YOU THAT ON NO ACCOUNT SHOULD THIS WORK COMPROMISE THE IMPRISONMENT OF IGNATO. WE ARE PURSUING ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF NEUTRALISING HIM. BEING HE REMAINS YOUR

My Dear Venomskin,

It is with the greatest regret that I pen this note to you. I trust it finds you in good health and hearty soul, for I fear you shall not remain so much longer.

Your service to me has been without failing and for this, I am grateful. Truly there can be few who match your skill at forgery on this planet, if not the whole Segmentum. And yet, our paths, which crossed so fortuitously, must again diverge.

The enterprise in which we were both engaged has attracted the notice of some troublesome individuals whose intention is no doubt to stop us and bring upon us some punishment. Though such interference is typically beneath my notice, in this case I am moved to concern, for through you, they could conceivably get to me. Therefore, I have deemed your continued existence an unacceptable risk, and thus have sent one of my trusted associates to end our partnership, and your life.

Jordi is a very skilled operative and I trust that his work will be quick and as painless as is feasible. Indeed, I doubt not that as you sit down to read this, he is at this very moment standing behind you, ready to inflict a well-practised deathblow. Pray, do not look around. Jordi is most self-conscious about his prey setting eyes on him. His orders are to execute my will when you have finished reading, which you are very shortly to do, and so I suggest you take these moments to formulate what are to be your last thoughts. I suggest a meditation on your life and the service you have rendered to me, which though you may realise it not, is for the good of the Imperium.

Die well in the sight of the Emperor,
Your master, Ignato.

DARK HERESY™

THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED™

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Armed with knowledge of a foul betrayal, the Acolytes must delve into the heart of the Calixian Ecclesiarchy. Can you find the proof the Inquisition needs to stop the Apostasy Gambit in time, or will the Calixis Sector burn?

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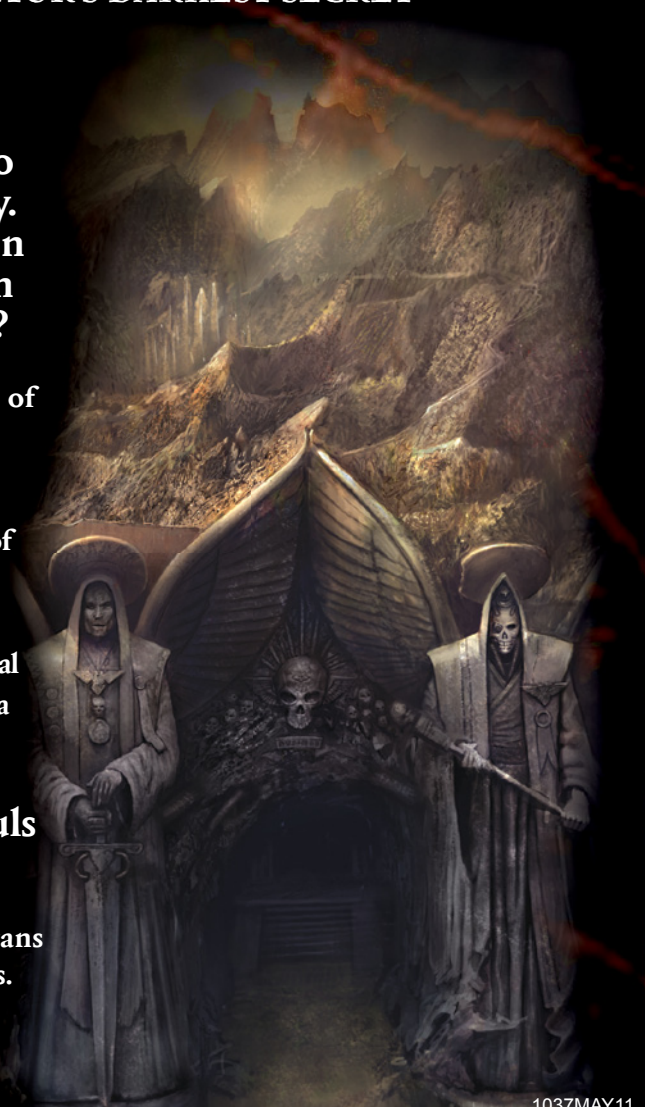
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