



DARK HERESY

A RETURN
TO THAUR

WARHAMMER
40,000
ROLEPLAY



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A RETURN TO THAUR IS AN **UNOFFICIAL** SUPPLEMENT
FOR DARK HERESY SECOND EDITION.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO TIM COX AND THE ARTISTS AND WRITERS OF FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES.
WITHOUT THEIR WORK, NONE OF THIS WOULD EXIST.

v1.1 SEPTEMBER 8, 2017

STOP!

THIS SUPPLEMENT SHOULD ONLY BE READ
BY THOSE WHO HAVE COMPLETED
FORGOTTEN GODS.

ACOLYTES SHOULD ALSO WISELY REFRAIN FROM READING FURTHER, LEST THEY LEARN
SECRETS THEY SHOULD NOT KNOW.

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ONLY IN DEATH DOES DUTY END.

The morning had been a pleasant one. My equine companion had already carried me most of the way along my assigned route for the day.

Out here, among the dense forests of my world, I had time to think, to listen, to watch. For weeks at a time I was out among the tombs and twisting trails of Thaur's wilderness. I was an outrider, a lone Mournful Guard on the fringes of a silent world.

By mid-morning, however, I had felt it. The shiver in the trees. The departure of the birds. Bad omens both. Less than an hour later, I had seen the first figure.

More than a dozen metres off into the woods from my overgrown trail, he shuffled about with a bizarre gait. Stumbling over the roots and gravestones within the forest, he moved toward me slowly, almost parallel to my direction of travel.

I slowed and halted my companion in order to take in what my eyes were seeing. From atop my mount, I could see that the figure, mostly decomposed, continued its unholy march. Bumping into a large Illyrian oak, pieces of rot and decay tumbled forth from the creature's innards. The abomination disgusted me. Its mere presence was a blasphemy against the restful silence of this land. It was even more disturbing that I knew not what manner of magick drove it forward.

Corpse Crawlers, one of Thaur's native parasitic creatures often manipulated corpses in such a way, but this body's state of decay told me that they were not the culprit.

Suddenly, I heard a second beast. The snap of dead branches alerted me that it was almost upon my position.

Thaur's forests are dark and dense. Sight lines are highly restricted. Still, I felt the fool that I had let it get so close. As the creature lunged from the dark undergrowth, my equine friend took flight.

The shock overtook me by surprise and I was launched rearward from atop my companion's powerful frame. I do not blame him for leaving me. I had failed to keep vigilant.

My back hit the wet ground with a sickening crunch. Although my armour distributed the blow, my muscles tensed and the breath was knocked from my lungs. I feared that my shoulder had dislocated.

Now, the closest creature besieged me. Its horrible snarling teeth gnawed and clattered mere inches from my face. Thankfully I had managed to press one of my boots into the path of my assailant. I thanked the Emperor for granting me such strength and speed.

Pushing the corpse away with a firm kick, I could hear the other make his way from the trees. The sound of his foot steps broke from a crackling shuffle into a series of dull thumps.

Rolling backward through the damp and tangled undergrowth, I bought myself a few precious seconds. I reached deep into my mud-caked cloak, unhooking my maul from its ornate mount beside my hip. Thumbing the activation rune, the blunt end crackled to life.

The air ionized around my weapon, producing the smell of righteous thunder. I praised the Ommissiah that my fall hadn't damaged the maul's delicate generator. I would be sure to recite the Litany of Thankfulness should I survive this day.

I saw that my first assailant had not yet recovered from the kick. His twisted form thrashed about in the leaves as he tried to right himself. It lacked any true coordination. Although outnumbered, I knew that I had the advantage.

I quickly closed the distance, delivering a sickening blow to the target standing in front of me. My maul punched deep into the creature's soft skull, sinking in just above the thing's right eye. Buried inside the beast's head, the power field of my maul crackled and hissed as blood and brain boiled into a foul soup. Still, it snarled and clawed at me.

I braced my free arm against the beast and with all my might I attempted to wrench my weapon loose. I felt my shoulder pop with a painful jolt. Whether it had fallen into or out of the socket, I could not tell.

I cursed the beast in my Thaurian tongue and assailed it again with another powerful strike. This time, my maul caught the creature atop the clavicle. Snapping through the decayed bone, it dropped into the thing's ribcage. A dark ichor drained from the gap.

Separated from the beast, the thing's shoulder and arm fell free, stripping away some sinew and bone. My maul tumbled free with it. I quickly struck again and again at the gaping wounds, pulverizing the thing's exposed innards. The crackling field at the tip of my weapon seared and smashed the last few remaining organs. The creature dropped to the ground, motionless.

Now, the second beast rose to his feet. I made quick work of it.

Catching my breath, I cleaned the gore from my weapon and examined the state of my shoulder. Then, the sounds of more and more movement sounded to my rear. Foolishly, I had expected to see my companion galloping back down the path towards me. I cursed my hubris. My work was not yet done.





CHAPTER I: THE WORLD OF BONE AND ASH

"Although the Emperor has forsaken us, we shall not forsake him. We will stand watch over his noble dead - until we too shall join them."

-Talmon Corren, The Keeper of Sorrow

This supplement serves as a follow-up to DARK PURSUITS from the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook, DESOLATION OF THE DEAD from the DARK HERESY Game Master's Kit, and FORGOTTEN GODS. Although not absolutely necessary, it is highly recommended that Acolytes complete those adventures first before delving into A RETURN TO THAUR. In the adventure contained herein, Acolytes will return to the World of Bone to investigate Thaur's quarantined population and their cries for help.

It's been six long years since the first 'Thaurian Incident' and the rebirth of the Daemon Prince Suvfaeras. Large portions of Thaur's surface have since been destroyed – burned away by the holy fires of the Inquisition and reconsecrated in the name of the Emperor. In the aftermath of the purges, the once venerated shrine world was placed into quarantine - forever sealed away from the rest of Askellon.

Seen as the architects of Thaur's great heresy, the planet's governing body, the Eulogus Askelline has collapsed. Additionally, with the influx of trade goods halted, Thaur's population has declined, retreating into small settlements, communes, and trading posts. Meanwhile, a small number of Mournful Guard outriders try to maintain order, protecting what little territory they can. However, on the isolated world, a vile cult has taken hold and the dead have begun to stir. Now, the Acolytes' warband will seek to determine if Thaur is at risk of a second daemonic incursion...

As well as providing a fully realized adventure module, this supplement details the history of Thaur after the events of FORGOTTEN GODS and presents rules for a variety of new weapons and pieces of wargear. Lastly, A RETURN TO THAUR offers a brand new character background – the Planetary Enforcer. Should players wish to create characters from Thaur's Mournful Guard or be forced to create replacement acolytes hailing from other organizations present on the once-restful shrine world, they'll have plenty of options with which to bring the Emperor's light to the enemies of the Imperium.

THAUR

Before its fall, Thaur was one of Askellon's greatest shrine worlds - overseen and administered by the Ecclesiarchy and renowned throughout the sector. Already the resting place of countless Imperial servants and saints, the eternal embraces of Thaur's serene cemeteries and silent forests were highly prized by Askellian nobility and commoner alike. Now, Thaur's dwindling populations attempt to carve out a bleak existence in the wilderness, neglecting their holy vigils over the dead.

For those well versed in the history of Askellon, Thaur is now but a whisper – an empty spot on a star chart and a hushed rumour told around the tavern table.

PLANETARY DATA: THAUR

Population: *Approx. 10 million*

Tithe Grade: *Exactus Non*

Geography: *Dense forests covering most of planetary surface, modest hills and valleys*

Government Type: *Independent feudal communes*

Planetary Governor: *None*

Adept Presence: *None*

Military: *Remnants of the Mournful Guard*

Trade: *None*

For more details on Thaur and its storied history, please see Chapter III of FORGOTTEN GODS.

AFTER THE FALL

Depending on how the Acolytes concluded the events of FORGOTTEN GODS, it is likely that the newly-summoned Daemon Prince Suvfaeras was banished and the Arch-Rector Carolus Renthear defeated - prevented from claiming the souls of the thousands, if not tens of thousands, of pilgrims celebrating the martyrdom of Saint Merusaad. Still, it is likely that the events of that day left a multitude of dead, dying, and insane strewn around and throughout the Great Ossuaria and many nearby monuments. Furthermore, although the daemon was defeated, Suvfaeras's looming spectre remains a threat. Impossibly ancient, the creature simply bides its time in the Sea of Souls, awaiting another foolish mortal to mutter his name.

The terrible rebirth of the Daemon Prince Suvfaeras had, expectedly, left Thaur in a state of shock – creating reverberations sure to last for decades, if not centuries. Thankfully, the Inquisition's response in the immediate aftermath was swift, containing the spread of corruption and hopefully preventing any further ruin from befalling Askellon.

HOME WORLD: THAUR

Players can adopt Thaur as their home world when creating a new Acolyte, especially as a replacement character while adventuring in that location. Characters from Thaur follow the standard shrine world rules (see page 42 of DARK HERESY Core Rulebook), but may use the Thaur Home World Bonus found on page 109 of FORGOTTEN GODS.

Knowing the importance of the posting, a handful of high-ranking Inquisitors vied for control of the follow up investigations on Thaur. Among them, Inquisitor Commodus Elbraith was chosen to lead the Ordos Askelline in rounding up those responsible. His investigation was thorough - locating even those who had fled deep into Thaur's catacombs to evade capture and a handful of new cults who had been attempting to understand or cajole the terrible being that briefly walked their world. Furthermore, numerous cells of the Faceless Trade were prevented from attempting last minute exfiltration of xenos relics. Rumour has it that some of these artefacts include those used in the Inheritors' blasphemous summoning.

With so many new conspiracies discovered, the fires of the Inquisition were brought to Thaur. Many were put to the torch – especially those unfortunate souls who had witnessed the daemon's summoning or Renthear's unholy sermon. The ensuing purges also brought about the destruction of many ancient catacombs and mausoleums, including the now-tainted Great Ossuaria and the monument of Saint Merusaad - the site of Suvfaeras's emergence.

Unsurprisingly, this wholesale destruction has caused a schism within the Ordos, sparking a great debate over the protocols for the cleansing of holy sites. Now, competing factions within the Inquisition prepare endless treatises, attempting to codify rules and thresholds for preparing warrants of destruction. Whether or not one can actually classify a location's level of spiritual corruption remains to be seen.

Ultimately, it was decided that the risk of Thaur's taint spreading to the rest of the sector was simply too great. Should Suvfaeras be unleashed again, there would be no way of knowing how or if the creature could be even stopped again. As such, after two years of deliberation, Thaur was declared *prohibere est* and placed under Inquisitorial quarantine.

In the months that followed, new orbital defence platforms were built, preventing visitors from ever stepping foot on Thaur again. Although the garrisons manning these stations have been stretched thin, they have nonetheless been highly successful in stopping the influx of smugglers and pilgrims alike. To date, there have been no recorded cases of successful departures or landings on the doomed world – merely debris and wrecks resigned to tumble along misshapen orbits until Thaur's gravity brings them to rest once more.

THE EULOGUS ASKELLINE

When the cult responsible for Thaur's downfall was found to be deeply ingrained within their planetary government, many Thaurians developed an air of suspicion regarding the Eulogus Askelline's complacency. This fell heaviest upon Thaur's planetary governor, Jeronius Pyre, the Lord of the Wake - repeatedly cited as the reason that the Children of Inheritance and Renthear's heretical influence were allowed to spread so far and wide. Once formally implicated by the Inquisition's investigations, it is said that Pyre was struck by a fit of madness, unable to cope with his perceived failures. He hasn't been seen since, and some say that he simply wandered off into Thaur's forests years ago, never to return.

With Pyre's absence, a new contender for Thaur's leadership emerged. Through a whirlwind campaign against the existing Eulogus' supposed failings, Arch-Rector Augustus Gasphene attempted to seize power - causing no more than a further splintering of Thaur's remaining government. As a result, the Eulogus quickly and quietly collapsed. For many members, the shock has left them unable to cope - unable to understand what has transpired on their once-venerated world.

Now, besides a small detachment of Mournful Guard and a handful of Eulogus scribes too devout to abandon their duties, the Palace of the Wake sits abandoned. Although those that remain have made great inroads in the reconstruction and reconsecration of local monuments and tombs, the rest of Thaurian society remains skeptical of their actions - especially those knowledgeable about the true nature of the Thaur's darkest day.

THAURIAN SOCIETY

As the Inquisitorial quarantine fell into place, the majority of Thaur's population became bitterly insular, retreating to lives of isolation inside small, sheltered communes. Although some tried desperately to keep the old traditions alive, without the support of the Imperium and its precious influx of goods, Thaur's inhabitants, who had until now devoted their lives to the dead, were forced to quickly abandon their previous ways of life - instead shifting to focus on their own survival.

In the past, many among Thaur's population would have acted as manual labour for the Eulogus - living close to grave-complexes, cemeteries, or Thaur's handful of spaceports. With many of these areas destroyed by the Inquisition, Thaurians have fled to far away villages, forming them into well-defended, cooperative settlements. Moving into these small communes has allowed Thaur's survivors to work together in mutual cooperation for a common good.

NO MATTER THE COST

During the conclusion of FORGOTTEN GODS, it is possible that the Acolytes had decided that their best option to defeat the daemon Suvfaeras was an orbital bombardment of the Great Ossuaria. If so, it is likely that this area still remains inaccessible and inhabitable. Either way, the untold destruction of these holy sites managed to destroy the daemon Suvfaeras and prevented it from claiming the souls of thousands of devout Imperial worshippers.

Depending on the type of destructive forces employed, the bombardment of these lands may have caused intense tectonic upheavals, spread immeasurable radioactive fallout, or destroyed all flora and fauna with potent virus bombs. It is up to GMs to describe these effects - be it a landscape pockmarked with craters or a radioactive wasteland filled with new mutant races.

The largest of these new settlements is Hope's End. Wanting little to do with the past - and hoping to distance themselves from the mistakes of their forbearers - the villagers of Hope's End have situated themselves a great distance from the Ossuaria and the Palace of the Wake.

Thaur's transition and transformation has not been easy. Even before the quarantine, the majority of Thaurians lived in wretched poverty and ignorance. As such, when contact with the Imperium was severed, many simply lacked the skills to survive on their own and wasted away. In the first few months following its isolation, Thaur saw a dramatic, rapid decline in population.

Thankfully, however, due to Thaur's well-fertilized soil, a culture of farming soon took hold, with each commune growing a sufficient amount of produce to sustain themselves. During especially bountiful growing seasons, crude trade routes form between the settlements, allowing an ease of trade for these agricultural goods. Commonly, each settlement will specialize in a specific product to trade with others, bringing a morsel of variety to their otherwise dreary and downtrodden diets. Trade routes and tariffs are administered from Hope's End, who also provide a handful of Mournful Guard outriders to protect the caravans from bandits, desperate survivors, and Thaur's natural predators.



THE INHERITORS

In the aftermath of Suvfaeras' awakening, many of the Children of Inheritance – more commonly known as the Inheritors – were overcome in despair, realizing that the symbol of devotion that they had unleashed was no xenos deity, but rather a powerful Daemon Prince of Chaos. In the days and weeks that followed, some of the cultists even turned to a life of repentance, hoping to seek forgiveness for their folly. Additionally, with the daemon banished and their leader dead, even the most devout went into hiding. Those that did not were quickly and ruthlessly hunted by the Inquisition and rounded up in Inquisitor Elbraith's purges. Even from deep within the Eulogus, the Inheritors were routed out, piled high upon a mound, and burned alive by all-cleansing promethium fire.

However, although none among the Ordos would dare admit it, there are undoubtedly still members of the Inheritors present on Thaur. Survivors – having either escaped or hidden from the purges – have recently attempted to rebuild their order. For all functional purposes though, the Inheritors are no more – largely disbanded and forgotten.

THE MOURNFUL GUARD

Before Thaur's fall, the Mournful Guard made up the bulk of the Eulogus' military and law enforcement capabilities – responsible for the duties that fall to both the enforcers and planetary defence forces on most other worlds. These 'Guardians' maintained vigilance over both the spiritual as well as physical well-being of their fellow citizens. Like their fellow Thaurians, the Mournful Guard were not immune to the Ordos' pyres. Although only a handful of their order were implicated in Thaur's treachery, many more were found guilty purely by association – lest the heresies of their kind spread any further.

With only a handful of Mournful Guard remaining, they have decided to centralize their forces at the Palace of

TALMON CORREN, THE KEEPER OF SORROW

Serving as an outrider in the Mournful Guard, Talmon Corren's early career was mostly unremarkable. However, rising slowly through the ranks, he earned a highly respected posting as Warden of the Eastern Borderlands.

During Thaur's downfall, Corren turned his back on the Eulogus, believing – like many others – that they were the source of Thaur's great betrayal. With a handful of Mournful Guard under his command, he retreated off into the wild to settle Hope's End. Unbeknownst to him or his men, Corren is likely the highest ranking member of Thaur's Imperial government to survive the Inquisition's purges.

Now, as one of the first to witness Thaur's new crisis, Corren has strengthened his convictions and redoubled his efforts to protect those in his charge. As such, his perseverance against such great odds has earned him the ancient title of The Keeper of Sorrow.

the Wake. This lessened manpower has meant that the Guard can no longer perform proactive duties – but rather focus on defending what little remains.

Others, namely the outrider Guardians once responsible for patrolling Thaur's wilderness, have left their brothers behind. Under the *de facto* leadership of Talmon Corren, the Keeper of Sorrow and Warden of the Eastern Borderlands, these outriders have divided themselves among Thaur's isolated communes.

Curiously, these Guardians have kept up the use of the non-lethal weaponry for which they were once known. Using their signature shockbows and mauls, they seek to preserve every last precious life left on their damned world.

OSSUARIAN CUSTODIANS

Long ago, the Ossuarian Custodians vowed to protect Thaur's ossuaries and catacombs from all threats - from the ravages of time and nature to the actions of tomb robbers and heretics. The events of the last few years have not swayed them from their cause.

Instead, heresies on the surface have driven the Custodians even deeper underground where they have formed secretive cloisters to continue their eternal vigil over Thaur's dead. However, with dwindling numbers and ever more frequent flooding and tunnel collapses, their order has suffered. These Custodians are becoming an increasingly rare sight and it's estimated that only a few dozen remain. Nevertheless, they continue to push back at Thaur's growing evils from within. Cut off and without resupply, it's only a matter of time until the darkness swallows them too.

THE ASHEN RAINS

Quarantine posed unique new challenges for Thaur, a longtime importer of Askellon's dead. At first, giant stasis vaults were hastily built in low orbit - hoping to temporarily house any incoming remains while they waited for permission to be interred in Thaurian soils. Within months, the dead overflowed the holds and corridors of these stations. Obviously, the sustainability of such temporary solutions was quickly brought into question. Furthermore, once it was apparent that the quarantine would be long-term, other more permanent options needed to be explored. First, the bodies of nobility started being redirected to other holy sites and shrine worlds, namely Ossuar. Still, the flow of dead from areas without knowledge of the quarantine or means of exporting them elsewhere continued unimpeded.

Through desperation, a simple, yet practical solution was found. Incoming remains were gathered in great number, loaded upon anointed containers, and hurled towards Thaur's surface. Now, Thaur's atmosphere serves as the greatest pyre in the history of Imperium, cremating countless dead and any accompanying pilgrims on their final journeys through fiery reentry. This newfound practice has kept Thaur enshrouded in a cloud of ash and gloomy twilight, rendering its forests and catacombs darker than ever thought possible.

Every few months, once Thaur's ash-choked skies finally protest, a great storm envelops the world. Massive electrical disturbances and black torrential rains flood the surface of Thaur - bringing untold dead and long forgotten remains to the surface. The surviving population believes this to be the will of the Emperor himself - using his holy tears to bring those that have been forgotten back to be remembered once more.

THE RESTLESS DEAD

In the aftermath of Suvfaeras's rebirth and the psychic shockwaves caused by his destruction, the dead rose. Few at first, but their numbers have steadily grown in the years that followed. What started as one or two sightings a year has turned into an unending deluge of flesh-eating monstrosities. The Ashen Rains have exacerbated the issue, bringing more and more bodies to the surface each season.

These shambling corpses now pose a serious threat to the citizens of Thaur and their safety. Those who hadn't yet relocated to Thaur's few protected communes have found themselves migrating in ever greater number. So too have the Mournful Guard retreated behind these walls - foregoing patrolling any surrounding lands or trade routes. That being said, the outriders of the Mournful Guard have done their best to deal with this new threat - using fire, shock maul, and shockbow to destroy any creatures they find.

In the last few years, the undead's numbers have swelled greatly - seemingly driven by some unseen sinister force. Some believe it to be an omen - Thaur's curse finally coming to claim their lands. Others have lost their minds and have even begun worshipping the risen dead - seeing it as a gift for their decades of service and faithful vigilance - that their previous charges are rising again. Many, minds utterly shattered, have retreated off into Thaur's dark woods to entertain these foul beliefs, embracing the hungering hordes with open arms.

There are but a few places free from this calamity. Although Thaurians burn as many of the creatures as they can, entire settlements have been overrun. Almost all of Thaur has been claimed by this newfound darkness, especially around the forsaken Ossuar.

Cut off and overwhelmed, the Mournful Guard and remaining Eulogus have sent for help. Using the last working shuttle on their world, Arch-Rector Gasphene and his scribes have requested aid from the Ordos Askelline. Although fearful of welcoming back the wrath of the Inquisition, the people of Thaur have no other choice.



THE RECLAIMERS

During the events of FORGOTTEN GODS, Tormus Fayne, a powerful cult leader, ordered a small group of Mourful Song cultists aboard the Oath Unspoken to follow the Inheritors to Thaur. It may be possible that some of these cultists even aided Inquisitorial assets aboard The Oath Unspoken or during the 'Thaurian Incident'. Regardless, many of their order made it to the surface of Thaur and survived Suvfaeras' rebirth. Fayne saw the crippling of the Inheritors as a major victory for himself - as well as the God of Decay - and viewed the events on Thaur as a sign to redouble his efforts.

In order to protect his foothold throughout the ensuing Inquisitorial investigations and purges, Fayne ordered his cultists into hiding - believing that one day he could use them to strengthen his power base away from Desoleum and grow the Callers of Sorrow into a truly sector-wide threat. Unfortunately for Fayne, the ultimate full-blown quarantine of Thaur severed all contact with his followers. However, even without his leadership, they have festered in the darkness, growing slowly and steadily.

Upon the first season of Ashen Rains, the large emergence of the undead was seen as an reaffirmation of their cause. The remaining Mourful Song cultists now believe that their true purpose is to raise *all* of Thaur's dead and claim this once-noble shrine world for Nurgle. As such, they've taken on a variety of new blasphemous traditions and rites and have begun calling themselves simply 'The Reclaimers'. In recent years, a few powerful sorcerers within their ranks have aided their goals - bringing even more of Thaur's forgotten souls back to shambling, rotten life. This unending dedication to Nurgle has now drawn the attention of the Plaguefather himself. Beneath Thaur's corrupted and ancient soils, a new daemonic threat has been born.





CHAPTER II: WEAPONS OF REMEMBRANCE

"They're coming over the walls! Call the Warden! Get the torches!"

-Maximillian Quith, during the siege of Afterlife

As acolytes advance in their careers, they're often expected to combat ever more powerful and deadly threats - enemies that can cause horrific damage to both body and soul. Falling in battle to these foes can mean an eternity of soul-tearing agony in nightmare realms of death and shadow. As such, acolytes require equally potent new arms and equipment to have any chance of victory - let alone survival.

These items can come from a great many sources - anywhere from the Inquisition's own armories to obscure relics found on distant, forgotten worlds. Nevertheless, almost anything an acolyte finds can be used in the Ordos' struggles against heretics, xenos, and daemons - they only require a keen mind and a little improvisation.

COMBATING THE ENEMIES OF MAN

In this section, players will find a new option for Acolyte creation as well as a small selection of new weapons and wargear for their Acolytes to use in their continuing fight against the enemies of mankind. New or replacement Acolytes can even now find themselves hailing from an effective - or corrupt - cadre of Planetary Enforcers - groups that can include anything from the Sanctionary Bondsmen found on Desoleum to the devout Mournful Guard of Thaur.

Furthermore, Acolytes will find a variety of new and old weapons to draw from as well as the possibility of assistance from a few non-human companions. Players and GMs can work together to adapt some of these new offerings or to use them written as-is.

NEW BACKGROUND: PLANETARY ENFORCER

Enforcers of local laws and customs, who bend those to their rulers' wills; benevolent or ruthless, few stand in their way.

"Best be off the roads by dark. We don't patrol out this far anymore."

—Mournful Guard Dallan Urr

Each world of the Imperium has a set of traditions, customs, and laws just as diverse as their citizenry. For the most part, the breaking of these codes and regulations falls far below the purview of the Adeptus Arbites. Infractions often require no more than a fine or short prison sentence. Planetary Enforcers are those tasked with administering and enforcing these local codes - either keeping benevolent watch over their flocks or suppling cruel forms of justice passed down from even crueler rulers.

ROLE WITHIN THE IMPERIUM

Planetary Enforcers are an often necessary evil required to maintain law and order on the local level. Without them, societal order can break down, allowing man to freely act out on his base instincts and desires. As such, Planetary Enforcers follow and enforce a codified set of laws or traditions to keep their local populations in check. Although many of these individuals act in the best interest of those in their care, others are equally corrupt, exploiting their citizens or enforcing the will of their cruel masters. In either case, Planetary Enforcers are likely beyond reproach, with citizens daring not to question these heavily armed and armoured men or women.

That is not to say that the life of a Planetary Enforcer is without peril. After all, they are still responsible for apprehending and bringing criminals to justice. Furthermore, they are often the first line of defence against civil unrest, riots, or even war. On less civilized or developed worlds, Enforcers may even serve as the planetary defence force - pitted against xenos marauders, mutant uprisings, or even incursions by the ruinous powers.

During normal duties, most Planetary Enforcers have assigned patrol routes or front-line postings, getting to know the inhabitants or their specific zone, territory, or province. Other Planetary Enforcers may serve as scribes, clerks, armourers, medical technicians or other support personnel as required. Either way, they all play an important role in the safety and security of the Imperium.

PLANETARY ENFORCER RULES

A character with the Planetary Enforcer background applies the following benefits:

STARTING SKILLS

Forbidden Lore (Underworld), Inquiry, Parry, Scrutiny, Survival

STARTING TALENTS

Weapon Training (Low-tech, Shock, Solid Projectile)

STARTING EQUIPMENT

Shock maul, Crossbow with incendiary bolts *or* shotgun, flak armour, amasec, ration pack, glow-globe *or* stablight,

BACKGROUND BONUS

Home-field Advantage: A Planetary Enforcer character can re-roll failed Navigation tests while in areas similar to which they originate (GM's discretion).

BACKGROUND APTITUDE

Fieldcraft *or* Perception

RECOMMENDED ROLES

Crusader, Desperado, Seeker, Warrior

PLANETARY ENFORCER CHARACTERS

No matter their background, Planetary Enforcers act with a singular purpose, often relying on no one but themselves and those who serve beside them. As opposed to the Arbites, Enforcers act as an extension of the will of their planetary masters rather than the Emperor's *Lex Imperialis*. However, like those that administer the Emperor's Code, the life experiences and skill sets found within Enforcer organizations are as diverse as the ways in which they are employed.

Individuals with keener minds may rely more on their insight and ability to gather information rather than their gut instincts and the barrel of their stub guns. Regardless, many paths can be argued to be the "correct" one. For Planetary Enforcers, it is the results that matter, not the method.

Usually drawn from the populations from which they are to govern, Planetary Enforcers are expected to be experts in the matters of their domains - able to notice even the slightest change in behaviour or a potential ambush waiting around the next corner. Training can often be short and brutal, with many new recruits being simply tossed to the wolves. Remarkably, these trial-by-fire learning methods can often be more successful in finding ideally suited candidates than other 'real' training regimens.

Planetary Enforcers are almost always engaged with the local populace - investigating crimes, rooting out trouble-makers, dispensing justice, or collecting bribes for their high-ranking masters. Skilled Planetary Enforcers must master all of these tasks - be it through the flawless completion of excessive amounts of paperwork, or the proper application of direct violence.

SAMPLE PLANETARY ENFORCER BACKGROUND: PRECINCT SIX, PRAXOS STATION, PORT AQUILA

One of but a handful of enforcer stations on Praxos Station, Precinct Six finds itself ideally situated at the mouth of Praxos' main void port. It is here that the Greater Askellon Trade Combine's enforcers maintain law and order and educate newcomers on the Combine's specific brand of justice. Although the majority of Precinct Six's duties typically focus on the collection of trade tariffs and the confiscation of contraband coming into and out of Port Aquila, the enforcers stationed here have recently been tasked with a new assignment by their Combine overlords - bust a bizarre new workers' union located deep within the station's mines. Why enforcers so far from Praxos' underworkings are being used for an anti-labour deployment is unknown, but at least the bonus pay is good.

NEW WARGEAR AND WEAPONS

"Hold them off as long as you can. Do what you must. The Emperor protects, always."

—Custodian Jerix IX

Nothing will stand between the righteous and their final victory over the foes of man. That being said, sometimes the Emperor's servants require a little more than just their bare hands. Be it ancient, incomprehensible relics or a simple club, almost anything can be used in the eternal struggle against the archenemy.

This short section covers a few supplemental items that acolytes may come across during their explorations of Thaur and other worlds of the Askellon Sector. It includes weapons, armour, and other potentially useful pieces of wargear.

BLIGHT ROUNDS

Made through unholy pacts with the ruinous powers, these rounds have a devastating impact on both body and soul. Whether dipped in corrupted oils or anointed by a powerful herald, these rounds are often employed by followers of Nurgle - hoping to spread the gifts of the Plaguefather.

Effect: A weapon using Blight Rounds gains the Toxic (1) quality but loses the Sanctified quality (if the weapon has it). Each time a characters suffers Critical damage from Blight Rounds they gain 1 Corruption.

Used With: Solid Projectile weapons

COMBAT PIKE

A simple weapon used on numerous feudal worlds, pikes allow a user to strike at foes while still remaining a reasonable distance from harm. Combat Pikes are two-handed melee weapons.

CUSTODIAN ARMOUR

Sets of this sacred armour have been used for countless generations among the Ossuarian Custodians on Thaur. Passed down from Custodian to Custodian, this plated armour incorporates actual bone detailing and intricate scrimshaw work recounting the deeds of its bearers. Legend has it that the solemn bone masks built into the armour's tall, ornate helms begin to weep when in the presence of fallen Imperial heroes. Custodian Armour covers all locations with AP 3 protection and caps a wearer's Agility at a maximum of 50. Any Acolyte who is not or was not an Ossuarian Custodian gains the Enemy (Ossuarian Custodian) talent while openly wearing or displaying Custodian Armour.

Equipment and Gear

NAME	WEIGHT	AVAILABILITY
Blight Rounds	- *	Rare
Custodian Armour	13kg	Very Rare
Custodian Tunnel-Seeker	- **	Very Rare
Sacred Salts	0.5kg	Very Rare
Thaurian Shelton	- **	Scarce

* As per standard ammunition weights.

** Cannot be carried.

CUSTODIAN TUNNEL-SEEKER

These sleek and sturdy cyber mastiffs were used long ago to seek out grave robbers and criminals hiding deep within Thaur's catacombs and mausoleums. Over the centuries, however, the damp darkness of their underworld domains has taken quite a toll. Although, not many of these ancient constructs remain, the few Tunnel-Seekers that have survived seem to have taken on minds of their own.

CUSTODIAN TUNNEL-SEEKER (TROOP)										15
H - 4 01-10		11		WS		BS		S 7		
AR - 4 11-20		11		37		-		45		
AL - 4 21-30		11		T 7		AG		INT		
B - 4 31-70		11		40		30		18		
LR - 4 71-85		11		PER		WP		FEL		
LL - 4 86-00		11		43		27		-		
						IFL				
HALF 6		FULL 12		CHARGE 18		RUN 36		THREAT 15		
TEETH AND CLAWS										CLASS MELEE
RNG -		ROF -		DMG 1D10+9 ² +SB (R)						
PEN 2		CLIP -		RLD -		WT -		AVL -		
SPECIAL: TEARING										

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Dodge (Ag)

Talents: Crushing Blow, Double Team, Frenzy, Hard Target

Traits: Dark-Sight, Fear (1), Machine (4), Mind Lock, Quadruped, Size (4), Unnatural Strength (3), Unnatural Toughness (3)

Gear: Cybernetic physiology, integral loud-hailer, integral micro-bead

PROMETHIUM TORCH

Perhaps one of the simplest and most useful pieces of gear for adventurer and citizen alike, Promethium Torches are found far and wide across the Imperium of Man. Although many patterns of torch exist, most use a centrally stored reservoir of flammable liquid - often promethium - to generate a localized light source. Promethium Torches can illuminate an area up to a dozen metres in diameter and burn for three hours before requiring refuelling.

SACRED SALTS

Sacred Salts can be found in the collection of a handful of clerics, shamans, and renown demonologists throughout Askellon and are used to quickly create barriers impassible to minor daemonic entities. The creation of this shimmering powder requires access to silver and a successful **Hard (-20) Forbidden Lore (Daemonology)** or **Very Hard (-30) Forbidden Lore (Imperial Creed)** test. Each unit of Sacred Salts can create a thin line two metres in length that prevents undead creatures or those with the Daemonic trait from passing. Sacred Salts cannot be recovered once placed and have no effect on entities with a Willpower greater or equal to 40. Once used, the effect of Sacred Salts wears off after one hour.

'THE EMPEROR'S GATE' TRUESILVER WEBBING

A small device no larger than a human fist, the simplicity of this rune-etched orb betrays its true value in combating the daemonic. Upon activation, 'The Emperor's Gate' bursts open in a shimmering cloud of silver filaments. These micro-cables fire outwards, affixing themselves to nearby surfaces and forming a web-like pentagrammic barricade of sanctified metal. Warp entities caught in this initial blast are often burned alive with righteous holy flame and the Gate's silver barrier is all but impassible to most daemons. After use, Truesilver Webbing can be recovered and reloaded using a **Hard (-20) Trade (Armourer)** test. Deployed Truesilver Webbing can be destroyed and has an armour value of 24.

THAURIAN SHELTON

Sheltons are large equine steeds used across Thaur for transportation, farming, and even sustenance. Although lacking any kind of natural armour, Sheltons are capable of dealing tremendous blows with their powerful hooves. Sheltons appear to be native to Thaur and exist in no other planetary records in Askellon. As such, they are well adapted to Thaur's temperate ecosystem and climate. Friendly and well-tempered, many riders often describe a close bond that quickly develops with these animals.

THAURIAN SHELTON		WALKER		
FRONT: 4		SIDE: 4		
FRONT: 4		REAR: 4		
CRUISING SPEED: 30 KPH		TACTICAL SPEED: 5 M		
MANOEUVRABILITY: +25		SIZE: ENORMOUS		
AVL: SC		CARRYING CAPACITY: 1		
INTEGRITY: 12		THREAT: 2		
CREW: DRIVER				
VEHICLE TRAITS: LIVING, OPEN-TOPPED, WALKER				
THAURIAN SHELTON (TROOP)			12	
H - 01-10 4		WS	BS	S
AR - 11-20 4		25	-	50
AL - 21-30 4		T	AG	INT
B - 31-70 4		40	25	15
LR - 71-85 4		PER	WP	FEL
LL - 86-00 4		36	14	08
		IFL		-
				-
HALF 8		FULL 16		CHARGE 24
RUN 48		THREAT 2		
HOOVES			CLASS MELEE	
RNG -		ROF -		DMG 1d10+5 ^{SB} (1)
PEN -		CLIP -		RLD -
WT -		AVL -		
SPECIAL: -				

Traits: Natural Weapons (Hooves), Quadruped, Resistance (Cold), Size (6)

Weapons and Wargear

NAME	CLASS	RANGE	ROF	DAM	PEN	CLIP	RLD	SPECIAL	WT.	AVAILABILITY
Combat Pike	Melee	-	-	1d10+2 R	0	-	-	Primitive (8)	4kg	Common
Promethium Torch	Melee	-	-	1d10-1 I	0	-	-	Primitive (7), Flame	1.5kg	Plentiful
'The Emperor's Gate' Truesilver Webbing	Thrown	SBx3	S/-/-	1d10 X	3	1	-	Blast (1), Sanctified, Snare (1)	0.5kg	Extremely Rare



CHAPTER III: INTO THE DARK

He cursed those that dwelt above. He hated them; their selfishness. If only they knew what gifts awaited their cowardly kind. Soon. Soon they would come to know them like he did. Even now he could feel them writhing beneath his flesh. It would not be long. He had come to this world long ago and now the wait was almost over. This world would be his, theirs, His. Fayne would be proud. Father would be proud. He could already imagine His sweet embrace.

Into the Dark is an adventure set after the events of FORGOTTEN GODS and sends the Acolytes back to the surface of Thaur to investigate a new daemonic threat. Six years after the destruction of a powerful daemon, the dead are returning to life to devour the living and the servants of the Inquisition must return to finish what they started.

This adventure has a slight investigative nature but mainly serves to allow the Acolytes to explore Thaur after the fallout from their previous adventures. Along the way, they'll face all kinds of daemonic perils and learn that the Inquisition isn't always as effective as they would like to believe.

GM BRIEFING

"Strange. Do you see that contact? That one, there. Looks like it's coming from the surface. Hold on, it's slowing down. Augurs show no life-signs aboard. Better go get the chief."

-Orbital Station X-IX watch log

Into the dark finds the Acolytes dispatched to Thaur to investigate the Eulogus Askelline's claims that the shrine world's dead are returning to life. There's fear that such events could be leading to another daemonic incursion on Thaur - perhaps this time damning the entire sector to destruction.

This adventure is intended for a group of mid- to high-level Acolytes who have already completed the adventures found within DARK PURSUITS, DESOLATION OF THE DEAD, and FORGOTTEN GODS. Although not absolutely necessary as a prerequisite, those previous adventures provide the context necessary to fully understand and enjoy the material contained herein.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Six years ago, believing that they were awakening a xenos deity, a cult known as the Children of Inheritance summoned a powerful daemon of Chaos to the surface of Thaur. Thankfully, an Inquisitorial warband was present to stop this otherworldly threat - destroying the daemon known as Suvfaeras and killing the cultists responsible for his rebirth. For years since these events, Thaur has been quarantined - lest its corrupted influence spread further throughout Askellon.

In the time that has passed, another cult has taken hold on Thaur - using the Inheritors' failure as an affirmation for their cause. They are known as The Reclaimers - surviving members of a Nurgle cult from Desoleum known as the Mournful Song. Once led by the demagogue Tormus Fayne, these cultists found themselves trapped on Thaur after the Inquisitorial quarantine fell into place. Rather than flounder and peter out in the darkness, they have taken to reclaiming Thaur for the Plaugefather and have begun to raising Thaur's dead back to unholy life. Hungering for the living, these shambling corpses are emerging in ever greater numbers - overwhelming the desperate few survivors that remain.

Thaurians are almost powerless to resist these malign forces. The remnants of Thaur's Imperial government - the Eulogus Askelline - have finally accepted the gravity of their situation. Sending the last functional shuttle from their world, the Eulogus have sent a call for aid. Their desperation has caught the attention of the Inquisition - the very organization that once decimated their order and razed many of their holy sites. It is at this point that the Acolytes become involved. There's fears among the Ordos that a second incursion on Thaur could spell the end for Thaur - and even Askellon as a whole.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Into the Dark is a fairly straight forward adventure that looks to take a group of acolytes back down to the surface of Thaur, through its twisting trails, and into the very heart of evil itself. Acolytes will look to combat foul cultists and daemons of the Warp while also navigating tense political situations and infighting among Thaur's survivors. Players will learn that not only are things never as simple as they first seem, but that even the most devout servants of the Imperium must sometimes question their faith.

PART I: PLANETFALL

The Acolytes descend to the surface of Thaur to find the shrine world mostly abandoned. Following traces of the Inquisition's purges, they locate the Palace of the Wake - the remaining seat of Imperial governance. The Eulogus Askelline's current leader, Arch-Rector Gasphene, explains to them the nature of the evil plaguing Thaur and claims that the origin of the undead is a heretic named Talmon Corren - once a member of the Mournful Guard. Gasphene provides the probable location that Corren and his men are hiding and is willing to give the Acolytes any supplies they may need. As the warband heads out to Corren's settlement at Hope's End, they come across the remains of the undead's latest victim.

PART II: INTO THE WILD

Making their way from the Palace of the Wake, the Acolytes head into Thaur's dark and decrepit wilderness. Searching for Hope's End they encounter a multitude of abandoned settlements and warp phenomena. Although they eventually find their goal, all is not as they have been lead to believe.

Through investigating the settlement and speaking with Corren, the Acolytes discover that Gasphene has lied - seeking only to further strengthen his dwindling power over Thaur. Most importantly, the Acolytes learn of the true source of the evil plaguing the land. Before they can discover any more, Hope's End is attacked by numerous foul cultists and a powerful chaos sorcerer. Once the acolytes think the battle is won, they're set upon by daemons of Nurgle.

PART III: DEATH AND DARKNESS

After recovering from the battle at Hope's End, the Acolytes make their way into the very heart of darkness - Nurgle's newly conquered domains beneath the ruins of the Great Ossuaria. First, the Acolytes must locate the entrance to the cultists' flooded lair and navigate a series of deadly subterranean obstacles. Fighting their way through desecrated catacombs and into the corrupted tomb of an ancient imperial saint, the Acolytes find the *Daemonheart* - a putrid, writhing monstrosity comprised of the rotting corpses of thousands of long-forgotten imperial servants. Here, they must find a way to destroy this wretched monument of filth, lest it birth even more daemons into reality.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Into the Dark is intended as a follow up adventure for a warband who has already completed the FORGOTTEN GODS campaign module. Having finished FORGOTTEN GODS (and hopefully a few adventures since), the Acolytes should already be well acquainted with their Inquisitor and have a wealth of experience under their belts.

As such, the adventure begins as the warband is summoned through whatever method most often employed by their master. It should be clear that the matter they've been brought together to discuss is of the utmost importance and urgency. Once the Acolytes are gathered, the GM should read or paraphrase the following in whatever manner best fits their Inquisitor's nature:

A message has been received. They say the dead walk on Thaur. The remnants of the Eulogus Askelline call for aid. There's fear among the Ordos that such events are an omen - precursor markers to another full-scale daemonic incursion. This message cannot be ignored.

You will be dispatched to the surface of Thaur to make contact with whatever remains of the Eulogus. Find the Palace of the Wake and investigate their claims. Destroy whatever malign forces conspire against them.

However, should these be the words of charlatans and liars - hoping only to lure us there to beg for the Emperor's forgiveness, you have the authority to silence them once and for all.

But... should they speak true, we cannot allow this darkness to consume any more of their world. The risk to Askellon is simply too great. Even now the Pandaemonium flares. Need I remind you, the Ordos do not believe in coincidence.

Go - make yourselves ready.

PART I: PLANETFALL

After the Acolytes receive their concise briefing, they will have but a short time to prepare. Keen-minded Acolytes may attempt seek out any relevant information about the previous events on Thaur or conduct brief research on the undead. Either way, GMs should be prepared to provide a short summary of FORGOTTEN GODS and a few myths or legends regarding the walking dead. However, GMs should refrain from divulging any information about what has transpired on Thaur since the quarantine or any details that would make it seem like the Inquisition was not completely effective in their purges.

WHO? WHAT? WHERE? WHEN? HOW?

It's very possible that the group of Acolytes tackling **Into the Dark** are not the same that were present on Thaur six years ago. After all, the lifespan of an Inquisitorial servant is usually measured in months, not decades. If so, the acolytes may be unaware of what transpired so long ago. GMs should feel free to provide a more elaborate briefing as both a reminder for those who played through the events of FORGOTTEN GODS as well as a proper narrative hook for new Acolytes.

GMs can also feel free to choose a proper cover story for the previous events on Thaur that best suits their current campaign - be it a massive tectonic upheaval that destroyed the planet, a devastating asteroid impact, or even a virulent plague. No matter what is chosen, the Inquisition must have provided a reason dangerous enough for citizens of Askellon to stay away from the doomed shrine world.

Research (see Explications in ENEMIES WITHOUT) into daemons with strong relations to the undead reveal tales and legend from cultures found all across Askellon. The Acolytes may even learn of a creature who "walks with death". It is known by many names: Putricifex the Unclean, Aynthrexes the Herald, the Wretched Prince, and the Lord of Rebirth among others. It is said to appear in times of decay - war, genocide, plague, famine - wherever massed dead can be found. Putricifex is the embodiment of death - a sower of ruin, followed by an army of the undead and undying.

Ultimately, it is up to GMs to decide how much time the Acolytes have before they must leave for Thaur. Either way, the Acolytes shouldn't linger on their studies for more than a day or two - their shuttle awaits.

ARRIVAL

Once they depart, the Acolytes' journey to the surface is quick. Besides a few tense moments crossing the threshold of Thaur's orbital defences, the flight is mostly painless. Their pilot informs them that they will be dropped at whatever is left of Thaur's main space port. Unfortunately, it also appears that a powerful storm system is developing. As such, their pilot and vessel will have to depart for a few days or at least until the growing electrical interference dissipates. Any kind of technically-based test performed by the Acolytes reveals that vox sets will likely also be affected.

PORT RESTFUL

After a short descent, the Acolytes land at the remains of Port Restful, a one-time landing field on the once-venerated shrine world. Even in its prime, Port Restful was but a simple clearing no more than three kilometres across in an otherwise forested area. Now, much of it is overgrown, with thick, tangled roots obscuring the landing zones.

Port Restful's once four-metre wall of human bones surrounding the clearing is now nothing but ruins. A handful of rusted landing platforms of cracked and blackened plascrete struts rot in the damp undergrowth. The minimal prefabricated lodgings on-site are dilapidated with many having already collapsed. Still, the Acolytes' pilot finds a spot to set their vessel down. Surprisingly, there's no one to greet them. Even the forests are quiet and still, with no signs of life. In the distance, thunder sounds from dark clouds - an ominous welcoming back to Thaur.

The Acolytes have but few minutes to gather their gear and unload whatever supplies they deem necessary. Afterwards, their pilot wishes them luck and takes off in a hurry. A search of the nearby sheds and ruins will find little of value: namely empty crates, rusted refuelling equipment, and a box of rotted Imperial rations.

From here the Acolytes must decide how and where to proceed. The most likely place that they'll make contact is the Palace of the Wake, but without signage or a clear road to follow, the task is not as simple as it would seem. A successful **Ordinary (+10) Navigate (Surface)** test reveals the likely route to the palace, but failure means that the Acolytes become lost for a few hours - wandering through overgrown trails before inadvertently circling back to the space port. Regardless, the Acolytes should eventually find their way. Should they have brought a vehicle with them to Thaur, an **Operate (Surface)** test is required to navigate the tangled roots and fallen trees covering the roads. Living mounts will have no problem with the journey.

THE ROAD

Through Thaur's dense, dark forests, the Acolytes navigate their way around ruined crypts and rotted mausoleums. With no one to tend to the small graves and shrines, it's apparent that Thaur's wilderness has rapidly reclaimed this land.

ELBRAITH'S PITS

Only a little while into their journey, the warband passes massive pits full of ash and mud. Beside them, rusted sigils of the Inquisition mark the sides of the road. An **Ordinary (+10) Scrutiny** test allows the Acolytes to realize that the pits of ash are the remnants of Inquisitor Elbraith's purges - giant piles of burnt flesh and rendered fat. Amongst the ash, fragments of bones, teeth, and few pools of melted metal trinkets and jewelry can be found.

An auspex or successful **Medicae** test confirms the remains to be human. Should any psyker in the party attempt a **Psyniscience** test in the area, the effect is shocking. The psyker receives immediate visions laced with terror, bloodshed, and fire. The psychic reverberations of the purges are strong and the veil between reality and the Warp is worn thin here. GMs can 'reward' any especially fragile-minded psykers with 1d5 Insanity points for their sorrowful visions of Thaur's darkest days.

TO THE PALACE

Once the Acolytes continue their journey, more thunder sounds in the distance as if echoing their footsteps. They'll have to travel at least another hour, during which a cool wind rises at their backs - bringing the smell of damp, musty undergrowth out from the forests.



Eventually, they'll see their goal through a clearing - the Palace of the Wake. Although damaged by the unfriendly years that have passed, the immense stone palace towers over the surrounding woods. Appearing mostly abandoned, many of the palace's outer walls have collapsed, revealing some of the chambers contained within. Still, the palace looks as the Acolytes can only assume it did millennia ago. Once the Acolytes are reasonably close, GMs should feel free to read or paraphrase the following:

The palace is like a solemn cathedral, and the unkempt grounds around the edifice are decorated with macabre crumbling statues.

The only recent addition to the structure appears to be a crude palisade wall. Along its edge, bodies lay impaled and still. A handful of black-robed figures shuffle back and forth, clearing the corpses from the walls and depositing them upon a cart drawn by a large equine beast.

When the Acolytes approach, the robed figures will look surprised. Panicked, one of them should run inside while the others look on in awe. It's clear that the Eulogus have not been expecting visitors for quite some time. Moments later, another group of figures emerge from the palace. At the head of the group, one rushes towards the Acolytes, looking relieved.

LORD GASPHENE

The leader quickly introduces himself as Arch-Rector Augustus Gasphene (profile found on page 28) and he makes it clear how glad he is that the Acolytes have arrived. Before getting to business, Gasphene and his aids will lead the Acolytes into the palace, offering up a warm and dry sitting room and whatever meagre nourishment they can provide. The shrivelled frames, torn robes, and lengthy beards among the Eulogus makes it clear that they haven't much to spare.

Gasphene, their self-appointed leader, has a wealth of information about Thaur's current predicament, but not all of what he offers is true. A **Very Difficult (-20) Scrutiny** test of any of the Arch-Rector's responses reveals that perhaps he is not telling the truth - or at least holding back the full extent of what he knows. Furthermore, in-depth questioning by the Acolytes often leads to circular arguments or rambling discussions about the nature of faith and duty. Even if the Acolytes have no suspicions as to the extent of his lies, it should be clear that Gasphene's sanity is questionable. He's convinced that a great enemy is conspiring against him and the surviving members of his order.

The actual truths that Gasphene can provide are as follows:

- After the Eulogus was implicated in Thaur's heresy and the fires of the Inquisition fell upon Thaur, the previous Lord of the Wake, Jeronius Pyre, was struck by a fit of madness. Unable to cope with the destruction of so much holy land and of so many of his order, Pyre left upon a 'great pilgrimage' into the wilderness. The Eulogus still await his return.
- The Palace of the Wake now holds no more than a handful of Eulogus scribes and a small detachment of Mournful Guard to keep them safe.
- Since the destruction of the daemon Suvfaeras, the dead have been rising back to life in all of the Palace's neighbouring provinces. Only small in number at first, the dead were quickly put down and the affected lands reconsecrated. Now, as each season passes, the dead's numbers grow. Many settlements have been overrun.
- The Eulogus believes that the dead are punishment for their past failings and that one man is to blame.

If the Acolytes inquire about the origin of the dead, Gasphene assuredly states that there is but one source: the 'usurper' known as Warden Corren. Corren was supposedly one of the first to warn the Eulogus of the dead - almost 'as if bragging'. Gasphene is convinced that the Mournful Guard leader is a warp conjurer and he will attempt to persuade the Acolytes of the same. Gasphene claims that Corren and his blasted followers have turned away from the Eulogus and, as such, away from the light of the Emperor, hiding themselves in the wilderness. Furthermore, Gasphene claims that Corren seems to have convinced many of his fellow Mourful Guard to follow his 'blasted' cause rather than the true teachings of Gasphene's order.

Even if the Acolytes do not inquire about Corren's current location, Gasphene will be more than happy to interject and inform them. He claims that 'the blasphemers' have travelled far from the Palace and deep into the woods to form their own cursed settlement and practice their foul magicks. The settlement is Hope's End - once a trading post, but now a 'wicked hamlet full of witches and the damned'. Gasphene claims that many who escaped the Inquisitorial purges six years ago have ended up at Hope's End - creating an affront to the Emperor and His teachings.

Pressed further, Gasphene tells of a detachment of Mournful Guard that was sent over a year ago to destroy Hope's End. Having not returned, Gasphene is sure that Corren and 'his heretics' had them murdered. The truth - unbeknownst to the Arch-Rector - is that the small detachment of Guard had seen the success of their Captain's new settlement and refused to return to the lunacy of Gasphene's crumbling empire.

A COLD DEPARTURE

Once the Acolytes are done with their questioning, there is not much reason to remain. It should be clear that their next objective is Hope's End - two days' travel away. However, should the Acolytes wish to rest and refit before their journey, Gasphene can offer a few spare chambers in the Palace's caserne. Although it once held close to two companies of Mournful Guard, these barracks are now almost completely empty.

Whenever the Acolytes depart the palace, they're greeted by a scattering of ashes falling from the sky like black snow. Seeing this, many of the Eulogus begin to weep, falling to their knees, turning their gazes skyward, and allowing the ash to cover their faces. In the distance, pitch-black clouds cover the horizon and purple flashes of lightning streak through the skies. Soon, the ash is followed by a heavy rain, streaking the Acolytes' clothing with black and grey stains.

Gasphene wishes the Acolytes well on their journey - the early rains of this season are sure to serve as a blessed omen from the Emperor himself. If the Acolytes inquire further about the nature of the rains, Gasphene explains:

When your lords quarantined this world, shipments of Askeillon's dead soon stopped. We waited two long years for the Emperor to bless us again with his restful servants. Finally, he showed his light once more. His children fill the skies above, and once full, a great storm envelops us all. It is the will of the Emperor himself - His tears bring His servants to rest - and those buried under this world rise to the surface to be remembered once more.

Again, navigation through Thaur's overgrown woods and winding trails is difficult. It takes great care to avoid getting hopelessly lost. Another **Ordinary (+10) Navigate (Surface)** may be appropriate. Thankfully, even if they become lost, the Acolytes seem to stay ahead of the black rains - only feeling their dark, wet touch during the brief moments that they stop to rest. The Acolytes should make sure not to linger too long, keeping as much distance between themselves and the dark, lightning-streaked skies behind them as possible.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER: PILGRIM OF MERUSAAD

Although not many travel Thaur's roads - especially not alone - it's still possible that the Acolytes may encounter a few survivors during their journey to Hope's End. One of these hardy few that remain is Orcam D'Lorr (profile found on page 28), a pilgrim making his way to the Palace of the Wake. After a few hours of gruelling travel, the Acolytes may spot this lone figure in the distance down a neighbouring trail.



GMs can also choose to have D'Lorr appear should their Acolytes become hopelessly lost. At first, D'Lorr appears to be one of the undead, his blood-streaked body shambling through the rain.

Strangely, his long grey beard and tattered black robes match those of the Eulogus. Where his soiled robes are torn away, wreaths of thorns dig into his flesh. His free hands drag chains behind him and after every few steps, he whips them about his exposed flesh.

As the Acolytes approach D'Lorr, he stops - intent on listening to his surroundings. Orcam D'Lorr is blind, relying purely on his other senses to navigate the world. D'Lorr is hesitant to speak to others, especially outsiders. Perhaps by appealing to his faith or sense of imperial duty, the Acolytes can persuade D'Lorr to talk though a successful **Charm** or **Command** test. D'Lorr reveals that he is a servant of the fallen Saint Merusaad, undergoing a holy pilgrimage to clear her name from the events of years past. Through a purification of his own flesh and blood, he believes that he may also purify her name. If asked directly, D'Lorr reveals that he has been to Hope's End a few years ago, but the roads have since been too unsafe to visit. Most importantly, he doesn't recall anything out of the ordinary about the settlement. Lastly, although he's never 'seen' the undead, he's encountered enough of their kind to know that they exist - and that they're dangerous.

THE LONELY RIDER

At some point, the Acolytes come across a black mound laying across the road. What looks at first like dirt and rot reveals itself to be shredded leather robes – the remains of a Mournful Guard outrider. The man's body is bloody and contorted - a truly fearful sight. A **Medicae** test reveals that the corpse is recent, although it appears to be torn apart and partially devoured. The bite patterns on the rider's flesh are recognizable as human. This revelation should trigger a test against **Fear (1)**, as the Acolytes realize that the Gasphene wasn't lying about the nature of this new threat.

Unfortunately, there doesn't appear to be any more evidence about the outrider's assailants. The **Tracking** special use of the **Survival** skill can find a few small trails leading off into the woods, but they're quickly swallowed up and lost within the damp undergrowth.

PART II: INTO THE WILD

With the Acolytes having now witnessed the undead's work firsthand, they must continue their journey to Hope's End - pressing ever deeper into Thaur's wilderness. Only after reaching Corren's settlement will they learn the true nature of this unholy threat.

AFTERLIFE

As the sun sets behind Thaur's ancient woods, the forest's darkened paths become even darker, with most of the way pitch-black. In the last few hours that the Acolytes have progressed, the Ashen Rains have grown heavier and steadier. Just as they give up hope of reaching shelter by nightfall, they reach the outskirts of a village - a small settlement once known as Afterlife. Strangely, no lights are visible within the hamlet's walls. With light fading rapidly and the weather getting worse, it should be evident that finding a place to stay for the night is quickly becoming a priority.

A cursory examination of the village shows it to be long abandoned, with many of the town's buildings empty and overgrown. The Acolytes also find a scattering of remains - too old to determine when or how they died. However, those who spend a little more time checking the insides of structures find a few more bodies that have fared better, having had at least some protection from the elements. Like the Mournful Guard outrider previously discovered on the road, these victims seem to have been attacked and devoured by human-like assailants. Once they're satisfied with their search, the Acolytes can make camp. There's a number of structures available for shelter, including a large two-story tavern at the centre of town.

SHADOWS OF THE ELДАР

Those who decide to spend a significant amount of time searching Afterlife - or who score at least three Degrees of Success on their efforts - may find a number of small, shuriken-like objects imbedded in a few surfaces or sets of remains. Acolytes passing a **Common** or **Scholastic Lore (Tech)** test realize that these small metallic discs are definitely not man-made. Those with the **Forbidden Lore (Eldar)** skill recognize the monomolecular wafers as ammunition from a Shuriken Pistol, a common sidearm of the Eldar.

Members of the warband who took part in the events of FORGOTTEN GODS may assume that ammunition belongs to Morrinoe, a Ranger that they had previously encountered on their journeys. Although they have no way of knowing it, they would be correct. Morrinoe, having once again returned to Thaur, was in fact present at the siege of Afterlife. However, just what part the Miandrothean ranger plays in these recent events remains to be seen.

THE BELL

As the warband settles in for the night, a thick fog blankets the village - allowing the Acolytes' meagre lighting to penetrate only a few feet out into the darkness. On the edge of sleep, they begin to hear the faint sounds of a bell ringing far in the distance. The sound is deep and rich and even miles away it manages to tug at the mind. The sound makes any listener uneasy, perhaps even physically unwell. Any kind of successful **Psyniscience** test will allow the psyker to feel some sort of malevolent presence close by before becoming overwhelmed by a foul stench. The psyker must pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness** test to avoid doubling over vomiting.

After a few minutes, the bell simply stops, leaving a lingering, eerie silence and the sound of rain. Thankfully, the rest of the night passes undisturbed. The bell is the Cursed Carillon (see page 48 of ENEMIES BEYOND) and although its full effects will not be felt on this night, it will return to haunt the Acolytes again as their investigation continues.

FORGOTTEN LANDS

As morning comes, the Acolytes realize that there is no escaping the endless black rains pouring down from above. The storm is constant and unyielding. The Acolytes will have no choice but to continue, quickly soaking their garments. Their journey continues down more of Thaur's lonely and forgotten trails – each one looking more and more like the last.

Thanks to the storm, large puddles and pools have begun to form and the old roads are quickly overtaken by thick, rich mud and the occasional body that has risen to the surface. The Acolytes eventually pass through what was perhaps once a clearing or small pasture but now a swamp. Thankfully, the trail is raised slightly above the surrounding land. Even in the worst sections, the waters are no more than thigh deep. However, as they begin to pass through, a feeling of unease and dread settles in. The temperature drops rapidly and another thick fog soon envelops all.

In the utterly still air, the faint sounds of another bell begins ringing. Again, it's distant, but a successful **Routine (+20) Awareness** test convinces the Acolytes that it is sounding from numerous directions simultaneously. The character with lowest Willpower in the group is immediately overcome with the need to vomit and they double over and empty the contents of their stomach into the wet grass below. In the small pile of digested food and bile at their feet, dozens of maggots squirm and writhe in their rejected stomach acid. Anyone witnessing such a sight will have to test against **Fear (1)**. The bell's ringing soon builds to a nauseating barrage.

In a split second, the tall grasses and shrubbery around the Acolytes turns black and decays, shrivelling to the ground. A smell that can only be described as rotting meat assaults the senses. Any food the Acolytes are carrying immediately rots, no matter how well packaged or preserved.

Then, the bell becomes a shrill keening and ghostly apparitions fill the air. Terrifying, whirling apparitions whip around the Acolytes like a spectral hurricane. Through the dense fog and bewildering display around them, they can catch glimpses of dozens, if not hundreds of figures shambling from the forests surrounding the swamp. Should the Acolytes have passed most of their previous **Fear** tests, GMs can request another test against **Fear (2)** for the otherworldly terror of what they're experiencing.

At this point, the Acolytes will probably fall back on their base instincts - fight or flight. Neither is particularly useful. If the Acolytes try to shoot the ghostly spectres around them, their rounds will have no effect. The next logical step is to flee, lest they be completely overwhelmed by the shambling forms slowly getting closer. GMs should allow this to play out for a few rounds, creating a suitable amount of tension.

Suddenly, as the thrashing teeth of hundreds of undead close in, a single bolt of purple-white lightning slams into the ground with a monumental *crack*. The air seems to vibrate as the swirling menace around the Acolytes instantly dissipates. The fog lifts as well, leaving the warband with nothing but darkness, confusion and pounding rain. Thankfully, Hope's End is but a half-day away.



HOPE'S END

Hope's End is a gated hamlet surrounded by a sizeable clearing. Protected by a large palisade wall made from trees cut from the nearby forests, the village looks strong and well defended. Fire and torchlight are visible from within, casting outlines of the sentries patrolling atop the ramparts. If examined, tracks leading to the front gate appear recent. Once the warband gets reasonably close, it should also be clear that there is some kind of commotion going on inside. The sounds of a large crowd are audible even through the hammering rain.

If the Acolytes are still unsure about Hope's End's allegiance, they may choose to approach cautiously or scout the village before entering. An Acolyte's **Stealth** test will be opposed by the **Awareness** of the Mournful Guard sentries (see page 29) patrolling the walls. Although the sentries are constantly vigilant for signs of the undead, a smart, skilled Acolyte can potentially approach right up to the wall without being noticed. Furthermore, the dark and stormy night provides excellent cover, making the test no more difficult than **Ordinary** (+10). If the Mournful Guard see anyone approach, they'll immediately try to stop them and inquire as to the nature of their visit. If these newfound 'guests' try to leave, the Mournful Guard will immediately sound the alarm and send out a small party from the front gate. More curious than fearful of the living, the small patrol will attempt to detain anyone they find rather than open fire indiscriminately.

On the other hand, should the Acolytes doubt the 'heresy' that Gasphene has described, they may also try to simply enter through the front door. Although the Mournful Guard are bewildered that travellers are out on the roads in this weather and so far from safety, they welcome the Acolytes inside. One of the Guard will ask them a few cursory questions about their journey and their origin. It is up to players as to whether or not they will reveal the true reasons behind their arrival. Either way, the Guard will attempt to lead the Acolytes to Warden Corren, who will be equally as curious about these new outsiders.

No matter how the Acolytes enter the village, they find it in a fairly good state of repair. There's a few dozen homesteads, a handful of merchant stalls, a stable, and even covered storage yards filled with various crates, barrels, and animal feed. It also becomes clear as to where all the commotion is coming from - at the centre of town, a group of locals have surrounded a hovel.

A PESTILENT FEW

The mob in town yells about some kind of pestilence - claiming that a single family has brought the dead down upon Hope's End again. A **Scrutiny** test reveals that the mob appears to be getting unruly, possibly even on the verge of violence.

As the Acolytes get closer to the mob, they spot three Mournful Guard attempting to keep order - one of them is clearly in charge. Should the Acolytes be accompanied by one of the sentries, the Guard gestures to the figure, announcing him to be Corren. Corren and his men attempt to keep order while the home's owner pleads with them. An **Inquiry** test reveals that the mob believes that this man's family is ill and that the pestilence they suffer from will soon attract more of the undead. Corren eventually silence the crowd before him and his men go inside the domicile to investigate. They emerge a few minutes later, talking amongst themselves. Corren addresses the mob again, claiming that their fear of pestilence is nothing but unfounded rumours. The gathering listens intently, slowly calming down before they depart.

Breathing a sigh of relief, Corren and his men collect themselves. If the Acolytes are amongst the gathered crowd, Corren spots them easily - it's clear that he recognizes the warband as outsiders. He gestures to his men and together they make their way over.

THE KEEPER OF SORROW

Like his men, Corren (profile found on page 29) is curious about where this new group has come from. He introduces himself as Chief Warden and invites the Acolytes into his station house off of the village square. If the Acolytes take him up on the offer, Corren dismisses his other men - telling them to disperse what's left of the crowd and to burn the house down and exile the sick. The decision doesn't faze him the slightest - remarking simply 'difficult times' if challenged. If questioned about the pestilence, Corren explains that it is some kind of unknown plague. Hope's End has managed to keep it contained so far, but they cannot take any more risks.

If the Acolytes reveal who they are, Corren is not surprised. It's not every day that a group of well-armed and well-armoured travellers arrives at his door step. A revelation of their Inquisitorial identities is also the quickest way for the Acolytes to get the answers that they're searching for. Otherwise, the players will have to dance around the topics of their investigation - hopefully not revealing too much of their ignorance of Thaur's ongoing issues. GMs should require a variety of successful **Charm** or **Deceive** tests should the Acolytes wish to be successful. After all, if the Acolytes claim to be native Thaurians, they would surely already know about the dead plaguing their homeland.

REVELATIONS

No matter how the Acolytes go about gathering information from Corren, he can reveal the following things:

- What the Acolytes have heard is true - the dead have returned back to life to attack the living. The defenders of Hope's End burn as many as they can find, but the creatures' numbers continue to grow.
- Hope's End's neighbours to the east and west are gone. Corren's settlement is now alone, with trade routes indefensible and the roads too dangerous for his scouts and dispatch riders to navigate.
- When questioned about the origins of the dead or about where they are coming from, Corren is clear:

Some greater force is driving them, I'm sure. I've seen it with my own eyes, felt it with my own hands - those creatures take more punishment than any mortal form could.

I do not know of their source, but I know where I saw them first. It was near the Great Ossuaria at the celebration for Saint Merusaad - that very first horrible day so long ago. I had been patrolling nearby and was attacked by a few of their kind.

I told the Eulogus in the days afterwards, but none would listen. I was silenced and exiled. I did not see the dead again until many years later.

Some said it was an omen, Thaur's curse finally coming to claim these lands. Others lost their minds and even began worshipping the risen dead - seeing it as the Emperor's rebirth - a gift for their decades of service and faithful vigilance.

Now, almost all of this land has been claimed by darkness. We dare not venture out now, especially to the lands around the forsaken Ossuaria.

If questioned about Gasphene and his lies, Corren has no problem speaking candidly. He believes that Gasphene is nothing more than a deluded old man trying to hold onto a past that no longer exists. Gasphene believes that Thaur can exist as it once did and the rumours he has spread about Hope's End now do nothing more than show his utter desperation to return the Eulogus to glory.

Once the Acolytes have gained all the information they desire, their path should be clear - investigate the ruins of the Great Ossuaria. However, before they can leave Corren and his men, a distant bell begins to sound.

THE BATTLE OF HOPE'S END

The villagers of Hope's End shudder, knowing what the bell entails. They'll quickly move to take up arms. Out of nowhere, the dense fog returns. Hope's End is deathly silent besides the incessant ringing of the Carillon. Corren will ask the Acolytes for aid before he leaves to quickly organize a defence. The warband will have but a few moments to prepare. If they take the opportunity to peer out over the walls, they'll see a few flickering lights darting through the mist.

Then, screams sound from within the village as these bright glowing lights arc high over the walls. As they sail closer, the Acolytes can see that the lights are crude glass firebombs - the first of which slam into a few timber homes and burst into flames. GMs should try to get across the sheer sense of chaos as villagers run for shelter and these fiery salvos light up the night sky. Furthermore, before the Acolytes can even start to help mount a defence, there's a great shattering *cr-crack*. Suddenly, the village's gate is torn open. The enemy pours into Hope's End.



The smell precedes them, but as the first wave enters the village, the Acolytes finally see their foe clearly. Dozens of Restless Dead (see page 28) shamble forward with incessant hunger. The unfortunate few villagers caught in their path are pulled down to the ground and devoured alive. Then, handfuls of dirty, tattered Reclaimer Cultists (see page 30) fan out into the settlement, using their undead companions to shield them. Behind them all, great rickety carts trundle forward - atop which cages full of tortured and flayed Thaurians scream for their lives. Some of these captured souls are dead, others rotting alive. Great pustules burst open from upon their flesh, spreading clouds of choking black flies. The enemy spreads out quickly, slaying and pillaging all they can find.

Any student of the imperial war colleges would call this situation 'tactically diverse' and the Acolytes have a variety of choices with which to proceed. GMs should present the Acolytes with a number of threats to deal with as the wider Battle of Hope's End rages on around them. These can be tackled either simultaneously or in any desired order, but GMs should let the players know that any delay puts Hope's End in great peril. Realistically, Corren and the two men in his entourage can handle one of the presented situations, as they are more than capable of putting up a fight. Some example threats are:

- **Foul Magicks:** Near Hope's End's shattered gate, a powerful Reclaimer Sorcerer (see page 30) has already set to work raising fallen villagers, swelling the ranks of the undead. Every round, the sorcerer raises two more Restless Dead to join him as a Free Action. If Corren and his men are assigned to this task, they will fail, overwhelmed by the sheer numbers and strength of the sorcerer's forces.
- **Pillaging Horde:** A group Reclaimer Cultists have moved into the village and begun to burn houses. Six of them break off from the group and head for Hope's End's food stores. Should they destroy these supplies, the villagers will be without sustenance for the whole season of Ashen Rains.
- **Cornered by the Dead:** A group of undead has encircled some of the Mournful Guard that were protecting the walls. The Guard have now become hopelessly backed into a corner and cut off from the other defenders. Should they fall, Hope's End loses a great deal of its forces. At least twelve Restless Dead should prove to be a challenge
- **Children of the End:** A group of villagers have been ambushed while escorting some children to safety. Forced into the town square, four Reclaimer Cultists are closing in, ready to tear them to shreds.
- **Corpse Carts:** Fighting through the thick clouds of flies covering Hope's End has a penalty of (-10) to **Weapons Skill**, **Ballistic Skill**, and **Perception** tests. Should the Acolytes look to ameliorate their situation, they can set out to burn or destroy the corpse carts producing these swarms of wretched insects. Each of the three carts are guarded by two Reclaimer Cultists.

Fighting in the close proximity of the carts causes further penalties as described above, for a total of (-20) as the Acolytes struggle to breathe in the dense clouds of horror. Acolytes must either set fire to the carts or inflict at least 35 points of damage to each cart in order to destroy it.

GMs should keep track of how many victories the Acolytes obtain. Should the warband achieve at least three successes within a reasonable amount of time, the cultists retreat, leaving Hope's End. Should the Acolytes fail, Hope's End is utterly destroyed and the defenders' bodies are claimed for the Plaguefather. Once the battle is won, read or paraphrase the following:

As you think victory has been assured, you hear it: the slopping sounds of wet, heavy footsteps. A gargle and a great sloshing of liquid. Throaty, deep belches. Then you smell it: rotten meat, death, infection - so much stronger than before. Heavy clouds of flies burst again from the fog around you.

With them, two figures lumber forward: tall, single-horned beings covered in a slick mucus and dozens of pustules. Single milky eyes stare out of their grotesque, unholy visages. They slice at the air in front of them with giant rusted cleavers as their powerful frames slam back and forth. One begins to create sounds that can only be described as a laugh.

At this point, the Acolytes are set upon the final attackers of Hope's End: two Plaguebearers of Nurgle (see page 30). GMs should remember to immediately test against the Plaguebearer's Nauseating **Fear (2)**.

AFTERMATH

Defeating the Plaguebearers signals the true end of the battle. The Reclaimers' forces have been defeated - for now. Although the Acolytes have secured victory, it may not be enough to save the town. Scores of dead, dying, and insane villagers lay about the village and the frames of burning buildings present but a shadow of what Hope's End used to be. Two outcomes are possible and GMs and their Acolytes should decide the village's fate based on the scale of their own successes:

- The villagers of Hope's End will attempt to rebuild and rearm, lest the dead return. However, with their numbers lessened and most infrastructure destroyed, this won't be easy.
- The villagers pack up what little remains and begin a journey to the Palace of the Wake as refugees. Giving in to the Eulogus' control that they have fought against for so long, they will at least find some sort of physical salvation.

PART III: DEATH AND DARKNESS

Hopefully strengthened in their resolve, the Acolytes must now head to ruins of the Great Ossuaria and find the source of the creatures that attacked Hope's End.

RETURNING TO THE GREAT OSSUARIA

With night having fallen on the remains of Hope's End, the Acolytes may wish to wait until morning to begin their journey. Either way, the trip to the Great Ossuaria is long - at least a full-day's ride. Should the players convince Corren and some of his men to accompany them, the Mournful Guard share numerous uneasy glances during the trip - clearly uncomfortable so far from the relative safety of their commune, even in its half-destroyed state.

As the group makes its way, the blasted fog comes and goes, often shrouding the paths ahead. Although likely on guard, the Acolytes will find that no new threats materialize - the forces of Nurgle are simply too depleted to mount any kind of sizeable attack so soon. Eventually, the warband will find their goal - Thaur's Great Ossuaria, or at least what little of it that remains.

RUINS OF THE OLD WAYS

Now, the Ossuaria is nothing but an enormous clearing pockmarked by giant craters digging deep into the earth. It appears that only a scattering of bone edifices and crumbling monuments seem fortunate enough to have escaped the Inquisition's wrath. Strangely, the forests here have refused to grow back. Instead, the Acolytes find only decay and tangled roots. The massive craters - perhaps the result of a decades-past orbital bombardment - give way to once-hidden catacombs and tunnels below - many collapsing into long-forgotten tombs or passageways.

This nightmarish honeycomb of bones and ash stretches on for miles on end, as if the very land itself is rotting away. Furthermore, with the addition of the still-pouring Ashen Rains, many of these craters and unearthed crypts have filled with foul, brackish waters. In other places, run offs and flash floods have created whole rivers and waterfalls washing down into the depths below. Navigation through this area is difficult for even the most sure-footed Acolyte and requires some kind of **Agility** test to prevent slipping into or being swallowed by the exposed tunnels and catacombs. Should the Acolytes have brought a vehicle or any living mounts, an applicable **Hard (-20) Operate (Surface)** or **Survival** test is required. Once the players gets the lay of the land, they'll have to begin the difficult task of finding the entrance to The Reclaimers' lair.

A variety of approaches will work here, namely the **Tracking** use of the **Survival** skill, **Psynicience**, or even an extremely successful **Awareness** or **Scrutiny** test. With any Degrees of Success, the Acolytes discover tracks leading to crude metal and wood handholds carved into a rock face as it snakes its way underground. Positioned beside one of the newly-formed waterfalls of mud and rot, the climb down is perilous. Those without climbing gear should make a **Difficult (-10) Athletics** test or risk falling a dozen or so metres down onto the jagged rocks below.

Eventually, the warband reaches the bottom - lowering themselves down into a roughly-hewn passageway. A few piled bone totems mark the beginning of this tunnel. Once lit by torches now long extinguished, the tunnels are pitch-black - a labyrinthine abyss stretching off in all directions. Proceeding in, the Acolytes begin their journey into the very heart of Thaur's darkness. At first, most of the tunnels are free of debris or water, but soon they'll come across many passageways that are either unstable or that have collapsed completely. In other places, the Acolytes will have to submerge themselves, squeezing through and under cave-ins or flooded corridors. GMs should emphasize the claustrophobic nature of the Acolytes' surroundings and that even the most navigable of passages are cramped - some with no room for more than one abreast. Either way, the dampness and darkness pervades all.

THE RIVER

One of the Acolytes' first real obstacles is an underground river - roughly a dozen metres in width and moving rapidly. Without spending hours doubling back, crossing these subterranean rapids seems to be the only way deeper into the catacombs. If The Reclaimers have a way across, it's certainly not visible. Here, the Acolytes must decide how to best cross this rapidly flowing mud and decay without being washed away. Hopefully, they have come well-prepared. GMs should look for a creative solution, using a mix of teamwork, trust, hard work, and improvisation. No solution is any worse than the next, but GMs should remind players of the consequences should they slip into the rapidly flowing mire. They may, in fact, end up as yet another one of the corpses currently washing by.

NURGLE'S DOMAIN

When the Acolytes manage to cross the river of filth, they're greeted by a single strike of the cursed bell. The sound is mind-shatteringly loud, seemingly resonating through the very rock itself. As the bell echoes through their minds, it's followed by a monumental moan - like a hundred thousand souls crying out in agony - a sick welcoming from the Plaguefather.

Proceeding deeper and deeper through more forgotten passageways, the stench of the river doesn't seem to fade. Instead, it worsens. Now, the temperature has also seemingly climbed, leaving the rock faces dripping wet. A slight fog starts to build and steam obscures the way ahead. Soon, colourful moulds, fungus, and other tell-tale signs of decay cover every inch of every surface. The tunnels quickly become an even more wretched place - a true assault on the senses. These unnatural sights would strain the mettle of any mortal man or woman and require a test against **Fear (1)**.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER: NURGLINGS!

If the Acolytes are already on edge, it may be a good time to surprise them with a few weaker foes. At some point, as the Acolytes are squeezing through an especially narrow and slimy passageway, they begin to hear the faint sounds of cackling laughter. Seconds later, a section of tunnel collapses, unleashing a tide of Nurglings (see page 30). GMs should use enough of them to pose more of an inconvenience than any real challenge. In most cases, half a dozen or so should do. When a sufficient amount of their kind have been killed, any remaining Nurglings will scuttle off into the darkness, diving back into whatever cracks and holes they can fit into.

THE TOMB

The Acolytes will eventually reach a dead end. In the floor, a small circular opening has been carved, crudely illuminated by torchlight coming from below. The Reclaimers have also set up some kind of rope ladder, haphazardly nailed into a nearby wall. Descending, the Acolytes find their goal. Here, in the defiled tomb of some long-forgotten saint, they find the *Daemonheart*.

The sight in front of the Acolytes should be horrifying - disturbing at levels that most minds cannot even begin to comprehend. The chamber is large - some hundred metres across and another fifty high. Massive tree roots descend from the darkness above, criss-crossing back and forth and forming slick, rotting walkways and alcoves. Black, putrid water pours in from various points on the walls and ceiling while also bubbling up from cracks in the rocky floor. Thick, viscous pools hide much of whatever solid footing may be found below - however, these pools are now more blood and pus than rotten water and mud.

At the centre of this chamber is the true nightmare - an inexplicable sight - a giant mass of bodies, bones, and rot. Like an incomprehensible tumour four stories high, the mass pulsates and shakes. Atop the putrid, dripping pile of flesh and mould, the Acolytes see a single large bell - rusted brass, cracked, and riddled with holes. Unmoving, it rings. The giant mass moans - a sanity-shattering cacophony of pain and anguish. The source is clear: almost as if melted into the pile of putrescent miasma, Thaur's missing villagers scream. For good measure, GMs should make their Acolytes test against Nauseating **Fear (3)**.

Furthermore, from between the slick, disgusting folds of the daemon-thing, bulbous sacs drop to the ground, striking off the rocks and tree roots found below. Upon striking the ground, the sacs burst open, spilling their foul fluids and birthing wretched Plaguebearers and other twisted entities. Scores of Restless Dead begin emerging from the chamber's rotten pools to greet their new brothers and sisters - and the Acolytes too...

DAEMONBANE

This fight will not be an easy one. Even the strongest and most well equipped warbands would be apt to rethink the choices that have brought them here. Although anti-climactic, there is no penalty for running - hoping to live and fight another day. These are the types of assignments for Battle Brothers of the Grey Knights or the Deathwatch of Watch Station Kantrel. Nevertheless, quick-witted Acolytes do actually stand a fighting chance.



The *Daemonheart* is a truly horrible monstrosity - a vessel of rot and rebirth, bringing a constant stream of Nurgle's followers into reality. It is also near invulnerable - save for the Cursed Carillon that sits atop its shapeless form. Only by destroying this bell can the Acolytes hope to succeed. The Carillon has an Armour Rating of 32 and will take numerous hits from explosives, psychic attacks, or weapons with a great degree of armour penetration. If the Acolytes wish to get into close proximity to the Carillon, they will find the task to be equally challenging. Climbing the *Daemonheart* is possible, albeit difficult. Additionally, whoever attempts such a feat will surely become the focus of many of the daemonic entities already surrounding the warband.

Throughout their discovery of the *Daemonheart's* weakness and their attempt to destroy the bell, the Acolytes will have to deal with a variety of threats. GMs should feel free to use a diverse set of foes - be it Reclaimer Cultists firing down on the Acolytes from passageways above, or the newly-formed Plaguebearers emerging from their birthing sacks below. A number of lesser daemons accompanied by herald can pose a decent challenge for a group of mid- to high-level Acolytes. Using a known daemon like Aynthrexes from DESOLATION OF THE DEAD can also create a memorable callback.

Once the Acolytes start their attack on the Carillon - of if the fight is going exceptionally well in their favour - the warband will hear the buzzing and beating of great rotting wings as two Plague Drones (see page 30) emerge from behind the *Daemonheart*. These creatures will hope to swallow the Acolytes whole and deliver their rotting corpses directly into the *Daemonheart* itself.

DESTROYING THE BELL

As the final blow is struck against the bell, it disappears in an explosion of blinding green light - showering the cavern with molten shrapnel and putrescent burnt flesh. From where the bell once stood, the *Daemonheart* peels open like a giant, rotten fruit, disgorging its juice as a torrential wave of pus and congealed blood. This deluge is followed by the fruit's seeds - hundreds of rotting placental sacks containing Nurgle's unborn young. Overwhelmed by the ichor and rotten fluids once contained within the gigantic mound, nearby Acolytes must succeed at a **Difficult (-10) Agility** test or be swept off their feet and dragged down and entangled among the chamber's many roots and mouldy crags. Coming to their senses, the Acolytes find the bottom of the cavern awash with an unholy slurry. From it, an army of the newly born daemons rise. Hundreds upon of hundreds of Plaguebearers moan - experiencing the pain of physical existence for the first time.

It is now time to escape - to summon the forces of the Inquisition in orbit high above and to bring justice to Thaur once and for all...



CONCLUSIONS AND REWARDS

Although the destruction of the Carillon marks the end of the adventure, GMs should either prepare some sort of short narrative description of the Acolyte's escape or be ready to play it out. There are a few options to explain the daring escape - be it a frantic retreat back through the tunnels, or an intervention by other forces of the Inquisition. This choice is up to the GM. The Acolytes have done their job, and it is now time to get them home.

No matter what choice is made, more investigations are sure to follow in the days that come. Whether or not the Acolytes take part is an entirely different question. Regardless, a major blow has been struck against The Reclaimers and the Inquisition will surely want to finish them off. Mostly importantly, the Ordos will need to determine if Thaur is finally past the point of no-return. Can there ever truly be salvation from the darkness Thaur has endured? Is *Exterminatus* now the only solution?

FOLLOW-UP ADVENTURES

Even though the immediate threats to Thaur may have been extinguished, many questions remain. Acolytes may decide to follow up on many of these leads themselves, and GMs should by all means encourage this thoroughness. Listed below are a few potential follow-up adventures for the Acolytes to undertake. GMs should also feel free to explore any other topic they can think of. After all, many uncertainties still linger from Thaur's darkest day six years ago.

POLITICS OF THE FORGOTTEN

Should Warden Corren have survived the adventure's events, there remains the question of his relationship with Arch-Rector Gasphene. With Hope's End likely destroyed and Corren and his men forced to return to the Palace of the Wake, there is a potential for a monumental power struggle between the ways of the old Thaur and the new. It's possible that the Acolytes may return to Thaur to see if Corren has submitted to Gasphene's deluded rule. Furthermore, there remains the fact that Gasphene lied to the Inquisition over the course of their investigation - an act that the Acolytes may not take kindly to. Lastly, the Acolytes may even choose to prosecute Corren for his own small heresies - namely his original succession from the Eulogus and his settlement of Hope's End.

THE PATH OF THE RANGER

A full investigation of Afterlife and other abandoned settlements has uncovered copious evidence that some amount of Eldar were involved in the recent events on Thaur. Tracking down the Rogue Trade Aristide Anzaforr, the Acolytes may try to seek out the ranger Morrinoe. Only by finding their acquaintance from long ago will they be able to reveal answers about Thaur's twice-cursed past. Surely, the rest of the Inquisition will also want to know how these xenos skirted their quarantine...

FAR AND WIDE

Examinations of the Imperial Navy's archives reveal that the orbital stations guarding Thaur waited three weeks before reporting the Eulogus' distress call to the Ordos. The Acolytes may need to find out if the Navy was simply trying to hide their own incompetence (for not having destroyed the shuttle immediately - as per orders) or if there are other forces at work. Investigating the station in question, the Acolytes may even discover that the Callers of Sorrow had infiltrated the naval garrison, hoping to buy time for their brethren down on the surface of Thaur below.

REWARDS

This adventure should take roughly three to five sessions of play to complete - amounting from anywhere between nine and fifteen hours of gameplay. For their efforts, the Acolytes should earn roughly 1000 to 1500 xp, depending on their actions. When in doubt, 100 xp per hour of gameplay (roughly 300 to 450 per session) can serve as a good benchmark. Each Acolyte who helps destroy the *Daemonheart* gains 3 Influence.

In terms of Subtlety, only the most outrageous of actions should trigger any change. After all, news doesn't often leave the surface of quarantined worlds.



NPCs APPENDIX

This section includes game profiles and information for the NPCs and enemies found in **Into the Dark**. Furthermore, for ease of use, a list of page numbers are provided for the NPCs and enemies taken from other books and supplements. GMs should feel free to use additional characters from the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook, FORGOTTEN GODS, ENEMIES WITHIN, and ENEMIES BEYOND as required.

ARCH-RECTOR GASPHENE

Arch-Rector and self-proclaimed Lord of the Wake Augustus Gasphene is a frail, aged man still clinging to a noble past. After witnessing the punishment his order endured during the Inquisitorial purges of Thaur, Gasphene is convinced that he alone will return the Eulogus to glory.

Use the profile of **Jeronius Pyre, Lord of the Wake** on page 138 of FORGOTTEN GODS. Remove Pyre's Archaeotech Laspistol.

ORCAM D'LORR

Orcam is a devout man, looking only to clear the name of his beloved saint, the martyred Merusaad.

Use the profile of **Devout** on page 389 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook. Remove the Devout's oath-cog. Add the Blind trait and Blind Fighting talent.

RESTLESS DEAD

Risen from Thaur's forgotten past, these walking corpses have an insatiable hunger for human flesh. As unholy servants of Nurgle, Restless Dead will refrain from attacking members of The Reclaimers or other Nurgle daemons.

Use the profile of **Animated Corpses** on page 23 of the DARK HERESY Game Master's Kit.



WARDEN TALMON CORREN, THE KEEPER OF SORROW

When the Inquisition came to Thaur, Corren's world was turned upside down. Many of the very citizens he swore to protect were now deemed his enemies. Although he understands and accepts the Inquisitorial duty, he doesn't necessarily agree with it. Corren is tough and stubborn, but also unexpectedly intelligent. He's seen enough over his years to know when to intervene in a situation, and when to let things slide.

WARDEN TALMON CORREN (ELITE)										18
H ⁴ 01-10 8		WS 47		BS 42		S 41				
AR ⁴ 11-20 8		T 45		AG 48		INT 42				
AL ⁴ 21-30 8		PER 43		WP 41		FEL 40				
B ⁴ 31-70 8		IFL -								
LR ⁴ 71-85 8										
LL ⁴ 86-00 8										
HALF 4		FULL 8		CHARGE 12		RUN 24		THREAT 17		
SHOCKBOW										CLASS BASIC
RNG 30M		RoF S/-				DMG 1D10+4 (E)				
PEN 1		CLIP 10		RLD 1 FULL		WT 5 KG		AVL RA		
SPECIAL: CONCUSSIVE (2), SHOCKING										
SHOCK MAUL										CLASS MELEE
RNG -		RoF -				DMG 1D10+9 ³ +SB(I)				
PEN 0		CLIP -		-		WT 2.5 KG		AVL SC		
SPECIAL: CONCUSSIVE (2), SHOCKING										

Skills: Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per) +20, Command (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag) +10, Intimidate (S), Parry (WS) +10

Talents: Counter Attack, Crushing Blow, Devastating Assault, Double Team, Hammer Blow, Hard Target, Hatred (Undead), Resistance (Fear)

Gear: Micro-bead, promethium torch, respirator, flak armour uniform

No Matter the Odds: Corren has seen untold horrors plague his lands and has survived to tell the tale. His presence in any situation is an inspiration to never give up, no matter how dire things appear to be. In a round that any character must roll for **Fear**, Corren can elect for a single target to re-roll a failed test.

MOURNFUL GUARD

For the last six years, the Mournful Guard have been unyielding in their duties - attempting to maintain order and protect the citizens of their lands. Although much of their authority was stripped by the societal collapse after 'The Incident', many of their order are still respected by their fellow survivors.

Use the profile of **Mournful Guard** on page 139 of FORGOTTEN GODS.



RECLAIMER CULTISTS

Whether a long-serving member of the Callers of Sorrow or a newly recruited citizen of Thaur, these cultists are absolute fanatics. Willing to fight to the death for their cause, they will do anything to continue spreading their Plaguefather's gifts.

Use a mix of both **Strain Infectors** and **Pestilents** found on page 407 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook.

RECLAIMER SORCERER

The most powerful and venerated of The Reclaimers, these sorcerers are trusted in raising the dead - ensuring that the cult will never be without fresh additions to their ranks.

Use the profile of the **Pox Magister** on page 405 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook. Replace the Force Sword with a Force Staff. Remove Touched by the Fates (1).

NURGLINGS

Use the profile for **Nurplings** on page 416 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook.

PLAGUEBEARERS

Use the profile for **Plaguebearers** on page 415 of the DARK HERESY Core Rulebook.

HERALD OF NURGLE

Use the profile for a **Herald of Nurgle** on page 119 of ENEMIES BEYOND.

PLAGUE DRONES

Use the profile for **Plague Drones** on page 118 of ENEMIES BEYOND.

THE DAEMONHEART

Formed in the immaterium by the psychic reverberations of Thaur's grief, the *Daemonheart* was birthed into reality by The Reclaimers and their foul beliefs. For years, it has festered beneath the surface of Thaur, digesting the decomposing ruins of the once-noble shrine world.

THE DAEMONHEART (MASTER)					300
H ¹⁰ 01-10	32	WS	BS	S ¹⁰	50
AR ¹⁰ 11-20	32	T ²²	AG	INT	15
AL ¹⁰ 21-30	32	PER	WP	FEL	-
B ¹⁰ 31-70	32	IFL			-
LR ¹⁰ 71-85	32	LL ¹⁰ 86-00	32		
HALF	-	FULL	-	CHARGE	-
RUN	-	THREAT	50		
PULSATING MASS					CLASS MELEE
RNG	-	RoF	-	DMG	1d10 (I)
PEN	0	CLIP	-	WT	-
AVL	-				
SPECIAL: SNARE (I)					

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Psyniscience (Per) +20, Scrutiny (Per)

Traits: Baneful Presence (40), Daemonic (4), Dark-Sight, Fear (3), From Beyond, Nauseating, Psyker (PR 1), Regeneration (5), Size (9), Stuff of Nightmares, Unnatural Strength (5), Unnatural Toughness (9)

Shapeless: The shapeless, formless mass of the *Daemonheart* prevents it from undertaking any kind of movement or making any kind of ranged attack. Able only to stretch and deform its fleshy mounds, it does not add its Strength Bonus to close combat attacks. The only action it can make is a Standard Attack. The *Daemonheart* can not be knocked over, rendered prone, or suffer from any other affect that would cause it to change position.

Wretched Rebirth: Fuelled by the corruption and sorrow of a thousand rotting souls, the *Daemonheart* constantly births new daemons into reality. At any point during an encounter with the *Daemonheart*, the GM can add any reasonable number of Plaguebearers or Nurplings into the combat.

Rot and Ruin: Any daemon of Nurgle can tap into the strong psychic fields emanating from inside of the sentient *Daemonheart* - using its Awareness and line of sight instead of their own.

Slave to the Carillon: Inexplicably linked to its bell, the *Daemonheart* is instantly killed once the Cursed Carillon has been destroyed.



A RETURN TO THAUR

The Ashen Rains are falling. The dead rise. Darkness stirs and Thaur stands alone.

A RETURN TO THAUR provides players and Game Masters with a brand new, fully realized adventure module that takes place six years after the events of FORGOTTEN GODS. Through exploration, investigation, and horror, Acolytes will need to discover the secrets of Thaur's darkest day before a new threat can claim this once-noble world.

This **unofficial** supplement for DARK HERESY SECOND EDITION also contains:

- A gazetteer detailing the dramatic aftermath of the 'Thaurian Incident'.
- New weapons, wargear, and companions for Acolytes and the enemies of man.
- A new Acolyte background - the Planetary Enforcer.

RETURN TO WHERE IT BEGAN.
