

DARK HERESY™

DEAD STARS™



PART III OF THE
HAARLOCK'S LEGACY TRILOGY

WARHAMMER™
40,000
ROLEPLAY

DARK HERESY DEAD STARS™



ROLEPLAYING IN THE GRIM
DARKNESS OF THE 4¹ST MILLENNIUM

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Introduction

What the Acolytes Should Know about the Legacy	6
The Revelations of the Haarlock Legacy	8
Game Master's Briefing	9
Beginning Dead Stars	9
Dramatis Personae	11
The Icy Hand of Death	12
Ice Station Mara	13
Overview of the Complex	13
Surface Structures	14
The Subsurface Complex	14
The Mine levels	16

Chapter I: Burning Heavens

By the Writ of the Holy Ordos	18
Interlude in the Void	19
Arming for the Apocalypse	21
Arrival in the Mara System	22
Return to Reality	23

Chapter II: Ice Station Mara

Nightmare Labyrinth	26
The Three Elements	26
Enemies and Allies	28
Forging Alliances	29
The Horrors of Mara	29
Winning the Race	30
Arriving at the Ice Station	31

Descent Through Fire	31
Encounters in the Ice Station	32
The Encounters	33

Part III: The Blind Tesseract

Entering the Tesseract	44
The Chamber of the Machine	45
One door closes and another opens...	47
Creating Additional Encounters	47
The Shades of History	48
Echoes of the Future	49
Example Encounters in the Blind Tesseract	49

Part IV: The Last Eclipse

Vanishing Point	54
Dark Star Rising	56
Resolution and Rewards	57

Appendix I: NPCs and Antagonists

Major NPCs	58
The Masses	65
Appendix II: Player Handouts	68



INTRODUCTION

*"And now the veil rent and the key turned,
Of bloody gyre flowing wide and lamented stars murdered cold,
What rough beast, its hour come round at last, draws near to
be born..."*

—Attributed to *The lost apocrypha of Yyat Darktongue*

DEAD STARS is the final part of the Haarlock Legacy campaign. Set amid the haunted icy world of Mara, a gate to nightmares past, present, and future awaits and the Haarlock Legacy's deadly mystery is finally revealed in full. The fate of the Calixis Sector rests on the shoulders of the Acolytes.

The third part of a trilogy, **DEAD STARS** could conceivably be run on its own with any party of sufficiently experienced Acolytes. However, it is far better served as the climax of the Haarlock Legacy Campaign. If this is the case, the player-characters will have played in either (or preferably both) **TATTERED FATES** and **DAMNED CITIES**. Additionally, they might have played the Legacy's 'prologue' adventure, *The House of Dust and Ash*, which can be found in the supplement **DISCIPLES OF THE DARK GODS** as well as any additional Legacy-related adventures of the GM's devising.

Although connected with its predecessors by its subject matter (the dark mystery of the Haarlock Legacy itself), and featuring returning elements and adversaries from the Trilogy's past adventures, **DEAD STARS** offers a departure in storyline and style of play for this deadly climax. While the previous Legacy adventures have been largely based in or around a single location and have featured a focus on survival and intrigue, **DEAD STARS** is instead an odyssey in the classical sense; a journey into the dark beyond, following Haarlock's footsteps, and a murderous race against others who would do the same.

The adventure begins with the Acolytes being placed in charge of an inquisitorial mission to the forbidden world of Mara, an ill-storied place of nightmarish fear and slumbering horror, in search of the final answer to the mystery of the Haarlock Legacy. Once on Mara, they quickly realise that they are not alone, but are instead part of a race against ruthless enemies who are also in search of the Legacy. After a battle in orbit, they must make planetfall on Mara in less than desirable circumstances and then make their way into the icy depths of Mara's hell-haunted and abandoned mining station. There, they must locate the Blind Tesseract, a malevolent nexus of reality, nightmare, past and future that forms Mara's dark heart. From here, the Acolytes must confront doorways to many different realities before finding the one through which Haarlock himself stepped and from which he may yet return—A doorway that leads to the infamous world of Dusk, to an audience with its legendary Hag, and to a terrible decision they must make as the Tyrant Star rises.

Can the Acolytes survive travelling Haarlock's path? And if they can, can they prevent the traveller's return? Should they even try? It is for them to decide.



PLAYING FOR KEEPS

The purpose of **DEAD STARS** is to serve as a powerful climax to the Haarlock Legacy campaign. In the grim darkness of the 41st millennium, that epic quality must be met with an equally powerful set of threats and challenges to confront the player-characters. Dangers that would kill a lesser person abound, and character fatalities (not to mention maiming, insanity, soul stealing and other unmentionable fates) are a very definite possibility. This is right and proper; the Acolytes are by now senior servants in the Inquisition and are no doubt marked for ascension in the service of the Holy Ordos should they prove successful.

DARK HERESY is, after all, a game of dark investigation and horror. Without risk, threat, and tension, the rewards of completing a campaign with these themes are unsatisfying at best. While casually wiping out the player-characters is just as undesirable, it is left to the GM's judgement where to draw the line. **DEAD STARS** offers both an arsenal of potential threats and a few 'get out of gaol' cards as well. First, the Acolytes have some assistance on hand in the form of the Maccabian Janissaries (see page 20).

In addition to providing the Acolytes with some extra manpower and fire support, these elite troopers can also be used as sacrificial lambs if needs be. If the Acolytes manage to keep one or two alive, they can also be used as last minutes substitutes for a player-character whose Acolyte has come to an untimely end. Similarly, a rogue member of the Amaranthine Syndicate (see page 66), or even one of the Dusk natives (see page 67) can act as a stand-in if needs be in order to keep one or more of the players involved to the end.

MARA, DUSK, AND POINTS ELSEWHERE

While running this adventure, the GM should keep in mind that the backdrop against which it is set changes radically at several different stages.

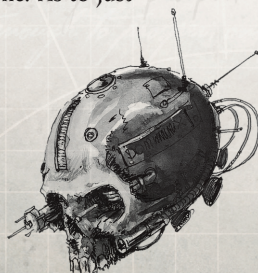
From the confines of the warship *Sigillite's Word* to the icy wastes of Mara's surface; from the nightmarish darkened tunnels of the station mine to the dark and steamy swamps of Dusk, each location should be unique, jarring and sharp in the player's minds.

To ensure that each of these exist firmly as separate and striking, a GM should achieve both a sense of something shocking and unusual. He should strive for a feel of vast distance and travel, and help achieve a sense that something far removed from the run-of-the-mill inquisitorial investigation is going on, even for the events of the Haarlock Legacy!

In order to help the GM in this, detailed descriptions and 'read aloud' text has been included to get things started in each of the relevant sections.

TIME, THE WARP, PARADOX, AND NIGHTMARE

DEAD STARS deliberately blurs the line between reality and unreality, past and possible future and the mind-churning horrors of the warp beyond. Hopefully, both Mara's reputation and the events of past Legacy adventures have prepared the Acolytes for this somewhat. Haarlock's fascination with clockwork, with literally capturing and turning back time; his indomitable will and readiness to risk anything; his bitter vengeance; his mastery of alien technology and occult lore; even the fact that where Haarlock has walked, the dead do not seem to rest easy; none of these should be much of a surprise to the Acolytes. The concepts of reckless, ruthless and nearly unlimited power, of Haarlock 'knowing things man was not meant to know,' and the horrors that surround him should all be familiar to the Acolytes and emphasised during play. The reason for this is simple: Haarlock's potential return should be a cause for excitement and quite likely dread for the PCs, as the consequences of such are shattering and on their heads should they fail to do what must be done. As to just what that is, is for them to decide.



USING THIS ADVENTURE

DEAD STARS is intended to take five to seven play sessions to complete and has been deliberately designed as a deadly and highly challenging adventure for four to six player-characters of around 7th or 8th Rank. It features a number of powerful opponents, a nerve-racking series of events in a number of locales, and a wide variety of ways to die! However, it also provides the PCs with some front-loaded help in the form of extra gear, and with backup in the shape of a platoon of troops to assist them. If the group has more than six Acolytes, or are of higher Rank than suggested, the GM should adjust the lethality and threat level of the combat encounters and rival factions accordingly.

DEAD STARS can be scaled to accommodate a group of fewer than four, or less experienced PCs, but this involves some work on the GM's part, particularly in order to reduce the lethality and the somewhat unforgiving nature of some of the encounters contained within. One potential solution is to simply have fewer combative encounters, and leave out the 'higher end' threats such as the Slaught Harvesters from the Blasted City encounter in the Blind Tesseract (see page 50). However, it is recommended that the GM not strip away too much as this lessens both the impact and the enormity of the danger **DEAD STARS** is meant to represent.

As with other parts of the Haarlock Legacy trilogy, the GM is actively encouraged to add new encounters, intrigues, and NPCs to **DEAD STARS** as they see fit, as well as to modify or ignore the ones presented here if it better fits his game. As the culmination of the Haarlock Legacy campaign, the effects and impact of what transpires here should be directly tied to the player-characters' own experiences, triumphs, and tragedies from previous games.

This means that **DEAD STARS** requires a little more work on the GM's part ahead of time in order to suitably expand on what is presented here with the GM's campaign. This is easily done by adding in familiar events and themes, not to mention old enemies from the Acolytes' past adventures. The rewards of doing so should be a truly memorable and very personal climax to the Legacy campaign. This can also serve as an excellent springboard for the Acolytes to continue on to higher things in the Inquisition's service or perhaps to pursue unanswered questions beyond the stars of Imperial space.

WHAT THE ACOLYTES COULD AND SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE LEGACY

Based on their previous adventures, there are a number of facts or theories the PCs might have regarding Haarlock, the Legacy, and their reasons for being on Mara. Much of this information is expanded upon during the course of this adventure and in Appendix III (see pages 68-72). For the sake of clarity, the most important and prominent of these are listed here:

VITAL INFORMATION

ABOUT THE LEGACY

The Acolytes should know the following information about the Haarlock Legacy by now, preferably through their own experiences, investigations and deductions. If any of these facts are not in the Acolytes' possession for some reason (or they have not fully realised their significance), they should be reiterated in their briefing during the adventure's prologue.

- Erasmus Haarlock was an infamous Rogue Trader of frightening power who hunted down and exterminated the surviving members of his bloodline in a bloody purge more than a century and a half ago.
- In the years after the destruction of his family, Haarlock pursued an obsessive and secret quest that remained unknown to outsiders; a quest that took him to both his family's ancient domains and the far-flung reaches of deep space, leading him to become one of the most shadowy and powerful figures in the Calixis Sector in the process.
- After not returning from some secret voyage for many years, he was finally declared lost more than a century ago in 703.M41. Without an heir, his Legacy—both in terms of his domains and his family's Rogue Trader warrant, a thing alone worth a hive world's ransom—fell into the interminable wranglings of the Chancellery Court on Solomon and was never resolved. In the century since then, Haarlock's estates and property within the Calixis Sector either were appropriated, fell into ruin, or were shunned, and Erasmus Haarlock became a figure of dark legend.
- At an ill-omened hour around a year and a half ago all across the Calixis Sector, past domains, devices and forgotten sins of the Haarlock line stirred in their slumber. In doing so they unleashed a chain of mysterious, unnatural and deadly events. These matters and their often bloody consequences drew the attention of the Holy Ordos of the Inquisition, as well as a number of dark factions and cults, to what became known as the 'Haarlock Legacy' and what it portended.
- Through analysis of the evidence of the Legacy's strange happenings and the involvement of the Acolytes, the Holy Ordos has learned that the final key to unlocking the mystery of Haarlock Legacy is an utterly forbidden locale known as the Blind Tesseract. This place, hidden deep beneath the ice of Mara was Haarlock's last destination, where he is believed to have 'gone beyond' and from where he will soon return.

DEATH OF ACOLYTES AND REPLACEMENTS

DEAD STARS is a particularly dangerous adventure for many Acolytes, and it is likely that many Acolytes will burn Fate Points along the way. Some Acolytes may indeed be slain. In this case, the Game Master has a number of options for the player to bring a new character into the adventure.

OPTION 1: THE DARK PACT

The bleak surface of Mara, the haunted world of Dusk, and the interior of the Blind Tesseract are all locations where the barrier between the warp and the material world is thin. It is thus likely that some denizen of the warp may be willing to offer a dying Acolyte a way to return to life—indeed, perhaps even to a hale and vibrant level of health that itself may be suspect. Naturally, many Acolytes may not be willing to accept “No, really, I’m fine!” as an explanation in these cases...

OPTION 2: THE MACCABIAN JANISSARIES

The Janissaries provide a number of options for the Game Master in **DEAD STARS**, and one important example is as a source of new characters should an Acolyte be slain. A Guardsman character is a natural fit, but almost any Career could be represented as a member of the Janissaries. In addition, the two named Sergeants (Childres and Makrade) are also good options for a new player character.

OPTION 3: INQUISITOR HERROD'S RETINUE

Inquisitor Herrod has brought his own set of Acolytes and retainers along on his investigation of the Haarlock Legacy. It would be very easy for a new character to have come from this retinue and subsequently separated or dispatched by Herrod's own orders to accompany the player characters.

OPTION 4: THE TIDES OF TIME

The alternate future that the Acolytes encounter in Part III (see pages 50-51) is a very interesting alternative source for a replacement player character. Naturally, the GM should think carefully before allowing a character to time-travel back from that alternate future, and the dark shroud of that future's fate will no doubt add plenty of Insanity and Corruption Points. It could even be an alternate future version of one of the existing Acolytes themselves!

OTHER CLUES AND LORE ABOUT THE LEGACY

The following represents information the Acolytes could have gleaned about Haarlock and the Legacy depending on how successful they have been and the adventures they have undertaken. All offer useful insights and pieces of the puzzle, but none are vital alone.

The Haarlock Warrant is ancient; awarded to the line following the dark days of the Age of Apostasy. During centuries past, Erasmus's ancestors were involved in what

would become the Calixis Sector, and have played an important, mysterious and often bloody role at various parts of the sector's history.

Erasmus Haarlock possessed a genius-level intellect, and over time, he developed mastery of both Xenos science and Warp Sorcery. He also studied and collected many secrets and artefacts gathered by his bloodline across the millennia.

Haarlock's private war of extermination began when the patriarch of the Haarlock Rogue Trader household, Albrach Haarlock, uncle to Erasmus (himself then a young man), died without naming a successor—as was the clan's tradition. In the bitter conflict that followed, Erasmus Haarlock lost his beloved wife and only daughter. He later hunted down and killed every member of his family, their families, friends, allies, and all that stood in his way to avenge the deaths of his loved ones and become the last Haarlock. It is said that he took great pains to inflict upon his blood family the same kind of loss he had sustained before their final destruction.

The one thing that Erasmus Haarlock desired after the death of his wife and daughter was to undo what had happened to them; to make them live again and return to the life that they led before they were slain. This became his abiding obsession, and Haarlock was willing to pursue any means to this end. In pursuit of this goal, he went beyond the realms of sanity, morality and mortal ambition.

Haarlock's ancient domains are strange and deadly places where time and space often do not seem to flow normally, ancient horrors lurk and the dead do not rest peacefully.

- On Solomon, where Haarlock's ancestor—after whom the planet is named—kept his stronghold, is a place called the House of Dust and Ash. There, amid various ancient artefacts of Haarlock's travels and conquests, a trap was sprung by his servants to capture and kill any of the Haarlock bloodline that might have escaped Erasmus's purge, and any of those foolish enough to claim his Legacy. A strange bound entity-machine called the Gilded Widow proclaimed Haarlock's return before the house was consumed in fire and death. (See *The House of Dust and Ash* in **DISCIPLES OF THE DARK GODS**.) It is possible that this heir has escaped the trap (depending on the GM's discretion) and may be out amongst the populace—or even one of the Acolytes themselves!
- On the opulent and wicked world of Quaddis, at the heart of the legendary Festival of Tattered Fates, a nightmarish servant of Haarlock's attempted to use an occult device known as the Steel Clock to escape the bonds of its servitude by calling forth the apparition of the dreaded Komus, the Tyrant Star. The agents of a blasphemous Chaos Cult intervened and attempted to wrest the machine's power for themselves, and many great nobles of the sector died as a result. (See *The Haarlock Legacy Part I: TATTERED FATES*.)
- On the blighted world of Sinophia, a Daemon that Haarlock had trapped between two mirrors and left imprisoned has subverted and corrupted the local Arbites' precinct. It used the corrupted Arbites and daemonically-infused walking dead to carry out a chain of thefts and murders that sparked near civil war on Sinophia in the process, all simply in order to be free before Haarlock could return. (See *The Haarlock Legacy Part II: DAMNED CITIES*.)

- Note that the Acolytes involvement (or lack thereof) may well have modified the outcome of these events. If they have not played in them, assume the worst: The House of Dust and Ash on Solomon burned, taking all with it, including a team of Inquisitorial acolytes; the Festival of Tattered Fates left Quaddis ravaged with hundreds of thousands dead and the governance of much of the sector threatened; and Sinophia tore itself apart in bloody civil strife that is still ongoing.



THE FINAL TRUTH (IF YOU ARE NOT THE GM, LOOK AWAY NOW!)

It's a trap. No, really...

When Haarlock opened the gateway into the heart of Komus, the Tyrant Star, or perhaps through it, or perhaps to something else far worse, all that remained of Erasmus Haarlock that was human and mortal was destroyed, and something unfathomably dark and terrible remained. This unknown entity is still driven on by Haarlock's indomitable will, and it wants to come back. Fortunately for the Calixis Sector, and indeed humanity itself, Haarlock cannot return easily. The Blind Tesseract can only be opened from one side, and its doorway has long since closed behind him, the Tyrant Star moving on in its inscrutable and otherworldly course. Until now.

Long ago set in motion, Haarlock's plan to return unfolded over the span of years with the intricacy and precise movement of the clockwork of which in mortal life he was so fond. The plan was to awaken his servants and destroy any enemies that remained, to bring them here to Mara to the Blind Tesseract, and for a human agent, willing or unwilling, to walk in his footsteps and activate his device and open the doorway to Dusk again as Komus blots out its sun at the appointed hour. Unfortunately things have not gone entirely according to Haarlock's plan, thanks largely to the Acolytes' prior involvement. Many of Haarlock's servants who could have performed the last minute calibrations to the device, such as the master of the House of Dust and Ash and the Widower of Xicarph have been killed, committed suicide or have fled, and many of Haarlock's former domains have been defiled or destroyed. Most importantly of all is that the keystone of the Steel Clock, itself vital to activating the Tesseract device, is in the hands of strangers with their own agendas.

As things stand, if anyone (Acolytes included!) activates the Tesseract Device (something of an inevitability given the adventure's setup), a chain of events is set in motion that frees Haarlock. However, thanks to the rogue elements that the Acolyte's actions have introduced, there is a window of opportunity to either stop entirely or subvert what is to pass. This may also lessen the scope for the Acolytes if they take matters into their own hands to judge the consequences of their actions.

THE REVELATIONS OF THE HAARLOCK LEGACY IN DEAD STARS

DEAD STARS offers the final pieces of the Haarlock Legacy puzzle, the details of which, in whole or in part, can be found out by a number of means in Mara's environs, which still psychically echo and reverberate with the aftermath of Haarlock's last actions before he passed into the beyond. These details are also known in full to the Dusk Hag in Chapter IV: The Last Eclipse (see page 54).

The last fragments of Haarlock's dark story are as follows:

- Erasmus Haarlock's beloved family was slaughtered by his own kin in a vicious war for the inheritance of the Haarlock Rogue Trader warrant. This single event drove Haarlock to slaughter all others of his line and to seek a means of undoing the past and subverting reality itself. This has been the cause of untold suffering and death left in his wake ever since, and may one day doom the entire Calixis Sector to an eternity of darkness.
- The endless search for a means of achieving this insane desire drove Haarlock on, and he left no art of warp-craft, xeno-lore, or ancient technology unplumbed to little avail. He was left with failed experiments, bloody disasters, and empty daemon-whispered lies. However, Haarlock's will would not countenance failure, even in so impossible a task, and after many unholy sacrifices, nightmarish quests, and disasters, he finally found what he believed was the answer: the Blind Tesseract.
- A strange and unnatural chamber deep beneath the terrible warp-haunted icy wastes—a remnant perhaps of some long forgotten pre-human race where past and future were one and the same and distance was meaningless—the Blind Tesseract seemed at last to afford the means to achieve his insane ends. Haarlock attained this forbidden place and mastered its secrets—no human had ever before managed to build an intricate and impossible engine of clockwork and blood to control its shifting portals—but he still found himself thwarted. Although he could travel to the past, he could not change it. Instead, he was doomed to watch helplessly again and again as all he desired and loved was taken from him, and the laughter of thirsting gods echoed in his mind.
- His soul burned into a cold cinder, he still would not relent, and Haarlock played his last card and used the Tesseract to find a place where he could learn the final means to achieve his desire: Dusk, and an audience with the fabled Dusk Hag who had eluded him in the past, a creature that was no mere myth but a being of appalling power and forbidden knowledge from which any answer could be attained for a price.
- What price Haarlock paid is unknown, but he had the Hag's mocking answer: His family had found the means long ago but failed to understand what it was. At Tanis, his bloodline had even captured the memory of its radiance but remained ignorant of its truth and power, and by their misunderstood lore he had used its shadow and echo in his devices without understanding their full implications.

His answer lay in that thing which mankind called Komus, the Tyrant Star. Only that baleful wanderer had the power to end his desires she said, and to it he must go, though in doing so he would be utterly destroyed. Haarlock laughed at her. Had he not already sacrificed all? Was he not Haarlock Kinslayer, master of deamons, enslaver of the alien, the night traveller? Did not the death of a hundred worlds already blacken his soul? And so Haarlock returned to the Blind Tesseract and configured his monolithic device to plot a course to where no man had dared before, opened the doorway to darkness, and stepped through.

FINDING OUT THE ANSWERS

The answers to many questions in **DEAD STARS** can be gleaned from the accursed navigator Nostromo (see page 36). Other avenues may include visions beheld in the warp-touched darkness of things past and the contents of the control cabin of The Clockwork Auger (see page 40). Also, items the Acolytes have brought with them connected to the Legacy take on new significance. Should the Grey Skin Psalter be in the Acolytes' possession the gibberish of its pages begins to resolve into legibility within Mara's dark embrace. Similarly, the mutterings of the increasingly lucid fragment of the Widower of Xicarph also begins to make a deal more sense if it is present.

The GM is encouraged to impart any further information he wishes about what's going on by any means he feels necessary.



GAME MASTER'S BRIEFING

DEAD STARS plunges the Acolytes into the final moments of the race to unlock the secret of the Legacy of Erasmus Haarlock, and puts them in the position to decide the fate of worlds and uncounted souls in the ages yet to come.

The following is a breakdown of the adventure's chapters:

PART I: BURNING HEAVENS

This section details the Acolytes' preparation for the mission ahead, their briefing and outfitting, as well as their journey to Mara itself. It culminates in a sudden and unexpected battle above the planet as the Acolytes' ship exits the warp amid a furious space battle between the Imperial blockade ships and those of the rival factions hunting for the Legacy. The prologue ends and the adventure proper begins with the Acolytes' planet fall under fire and the abrupt destruction of their escape route.

PART II: ICE STATION MARA

The first part of this grand finale to the campaign is a deadly competition to discover the key to finding and entering the Blind Tesseract in the warp-tainted labyrinth of Ice Station Mara. The Acolytes should have something of a head start thanks to their past experiences investigating the Legacy, but they face rivals of several different stripes, while Mara has its own very real and extreme dangers. In order to prosper, the Acolytes must discover exactly where and how they can gain access to the Blind Tesseract from clues left within the Ice Station, and by combining three separate elements to find the key to what they seek. What they cannot glean themselves, they have to take by force or guile from the others who also desire the Legacy.

PART III: THE BLIND TESSERACT

In this penultimate part of **DEAD STARS**, the Acolytes encounter the secret of the Blind Tesseract, a treacherous place formed from a twisted knot of warp power, where the laws of time and space do not hold. In the Blind Tesseract, the Acolytes encounter a machine of Haarlock's making, and the entity that controls it: the Iron Daughter. Using it, they must pursue Haarlock himself through doors between past, present and possible future. Here they are forced to live with the consequences of Haarlock's return or of stopping it, and uncover secrets from the past.

PART IV: THE LAST ECLIPSE

In an abrupt shift of locale, the Acolytes find themselves in the swamps of the accursed world of Dusk, far away from Mara on the eve of a great and terrible event: the eclipse of Dusk's sun by the Tyrant Star, and Haarlock's return, and with a momentous decision to make.

BEGINNING DEAD STARS

DEAD STARS begins with the players dropped into the adventure already on their way to Mara and assumes that they already know or have been told much about the dire history of the place and that it is where the Blind Tesseract may be found. The events leading up to the start of the adventure, however, have been left up to the GM to bridge in to his ongoing campaign as he sees fit, although some suggestions have been provided (see the Bridging into The Adventure sidebar on page 19).

THE RIVALS FOR THE LEGACY

Over the course of the Haarlock Legacy, numerous factions and powers have been drawn, some unwittingly, into the unfolding events. Some have eagerly pursued it for their own ends and at great cost, not least of all the Holy Ordos, whose agents the Acolytes have been. Some have prospered, others have fallen by the wayside or been destroyed utterly like moths drawn into a flame.

DEAD STARS assumes that other than the Acolytes, only three rival factions have made it to this last act of the Legacy: The Pilgrims of Hayte, The Amaranthine Syndicate and the agents of the Tenebrae Collegium. (Details of the personalities involved and their game characteristics can be found in the Dramatis Personae on page 11 and Appendix I: NPCs & Antagonists respectively).

The Tyrantine Shadow Agents

The Tyrantine Cabal, a division of the Holy Ordos of the Calixian Inquisition, is obsessed with the secret lore related to the phenomenon known as the Tyrant Star. The Cabal's masters have long suspected that there was some secret knowledge about the Tyrant Star possessed by the ancient Haarlock line. Recent events surrounding the Legacy have fanned the flames

CHANGING THE CAST

These rival factions for the Legacy are subject to change should the GM wish, to better reflect the events of his own campaigns. The GM can choose to bring in additional factions, reduce the number listed here or simply swap the involvement of one faction for another as he sees fit, although it is recommended for the consistency of **DEAD STARS'** narrative structure that the presence of the agents of the Tyrantine Cabal is kept. As far as multiple factions go, the tangled 'haunted house' maze of Ice Station Mara can easily accommodate more victims and can swallow armies whole if needs be, and merely arriving there first is no guarantee of success.

of that suspicion, and at least one splinter faction within the Collegium Tenebrae has moved its own agents into place to seize control of the 'Haarlock matter', regardless of any other inquisitorial involvement in the affair. Its shadow agents will stop at nothing, up to and including eliminating other inquisitorial agents, to accomplish this.

The Collegium's shadow agents are relative late comers to the game, but have already suffered losses, including the destruction of an elite spectre cell of agents on Sinophia. Thanks to their secret network of informants and agents within the Inquisition's ranks, they received the information about the involvement of the Blind Tesseract on Mara at around the same time as the Acolytes. They have raced ahead of the Acolytes to reach the ice station, only to find that the Syndicate has beaten them by the slimmest of margins. During an orbital battle with the Amaranthine ships, the Collegium forces put down a small team on the surface via a dangerous teleport drop (a risky proposition using rare and arcane technology) and were holding their own until the arrival of *The Spear of Destiny*.

The Shadow Agents on Mara are an elite retinue of acolytes under Inquisitor Herrod. They are there foremost with the intention of capturing if possible, or killing if necessary, Erasmus Haarlock and any allies or devices that may be concerned with the Tyrant Star at any cost. Under Herrod's command, they act cautiously but remorselessly, and while highly able, they have relatively little true or firsthand information about Haarlock to go on. Now trapped in the ice station, they cannot solve the riddle of the Tesseract on their own. Once this becomes apparent they are willing to countenance temporary alliances with any other factions in extremis (except for the Pilgrims or any other clearly diabolic cult), but always with the ultimate intention of achieving their own ends and leaving no witnesses alive afterwards.

More information about the Collegium Tenebrae can be found in **THE INQUISITOR'S HANDBOOK** while an example of their earlier involvement with the Haarlock Legacy can be found in The Haarlock Legacy Part II: **DAMNED CITIES**.

The Amaranthine Syndicate

The Amaranthine Syndicate is primarily an interstellar criminal conspiracy of smugglers, corrupt merchants, slavers and renegades operating out of the Hazaroth Abyss region of the Calixis Sector. What is far less widely known, even by those who deal in secrets, is that the Syndicate's true masters are a nightmarish xenos species of carrion-eaters known as the Slaught. The Amaranthine's hidden principals have been watching the unfolding events of the Legacy, largely from the shadows, and waiting for their time to strike. While the human agents of the syndicate believe they are tracking Haarlock to acquire the Rogue Trader's many valuable secrets and artefacts, their masters have an entirely different agenda. Their cold intellects have encountered Erasmus Haarlock and his ancestors before and see him as a very definite danger to their own future plans for the Calixis Sector, and would see that threat ended.

The Slaught gained the information about the Blind Tesseract recently by devouring the mind of a Tyrantine Shadow Agent. They have managed to advance ahead of their fellows by utilising their vast wealth to hire mercenary ships and raiders

MASTER NONESUCH

If the Acolytes previously encountered Master Nonesuch during the events of *The House and Dust and Ash* and he survived (or even if he apparently didn't; the Slaught are after all very, very hard to kill) the GM should feel free to exchange Miss Book, the Slaught Overseer used here for him, or add him to her party (particularly if the Acolytes are a powerful group), as doubtless the players will enjoy another chance at taking down this monster.

from nearby systems to deliver a single Slaught Overseer to Mara and to hold off the opposition long enough to reach the Tesseract. The Slaught's goal is to reach the Blind Tesseract and kill Haarlock or otherwise prevent his return permanently.

The Amaranthine Syndicate's presence on Mara is limited to a Slaught masquerading as a human going by the name of Miss Book and a sizable force of mercenaries and Hereteks it has brought with it. Aside from these few operatives, the loyalty of the Slaught's hirelings is dubious at best. Given the high fatality rate the ice station is likely to engender and the true nature of their master, they are likely to go rogue, seek more human allies, attempt to flee, or go mad.

More information about the Amaranthine Syndicate can be found in **DISCIPLES OF THE DARK GODS** while an example of their earlier involvement with the Haarlock Legacy can be found in the adventure *The House of Dust and Ash* also in that book.

The Pilgrims of Hayte

The Pilgrims of Hayte are a murderous Warp cult with an apocalyptic creed that has long been a thorn in the side of the Calixis Sector and a threat to the souls and sanity of the Imperium. Nihilistic and malign, the cult's masters, the false prophets, despise and scorn even the powers of Chaos and daemon kin they entreat with to grant them power enough to tear down the Imperium and plunge humanity into a new dark age of blood and misery.

The cult's interest in Haarlock is simple; his return has featured prominently in the crimson-visions and nightmare prophecies of their warp seers and daemon-possessed

THE BELOVED

If the Acolytes have encountered the Pilgrims of Hayte before, their methods and savagery need no introduction. In addition, they may well have encountered the false prophet known as The Beloved (see *The Haarlock Legacy* Part I: **TATTERED FATES**). Should he have survived those events, the GM may wish to use him again in **DEAD STARS**, either as a replacement for Ghost Priestkiller, the surviving false prophet lost in the depths of the ice station, or as one of his predecessors. If this is the case, the Beloved's frozen and mutilated body can be a salutary example of the price of failure, and could also serve as a host for the psycheneuein in part II (see page 33).

augers, and his reputation as an individual with many arts of destruction and steeped in dark lore is well known to them. Although far from a unified or even coherent group, several of the false prophets, in their insane ambition and overwhelming arrogance, desire to seize or corrupt the Haarlock Legacy for their own, diabolic purposes. Although the results of their labours so far have born little significant fruit, the destruction and terror that the Legacy has sown so far has been pleasing to their eyes.

Through their dark arts, the pilgrims came into the knowledge of the Blind Tesseract's involvement and importance in the Legacy (if not its true nature and role) far earlier than other factions, and have already lost several parties to Mara's icy depths without a trace. When the Acolytes land, the surviving bloody remnants of the most recent group from the pilgrims are lost in the dark cold, slowly being toyed with and destroyed by the haunted labyrinth and its unnatural denizens.

More information about the Pilgrims of Hayte can be found in **DISCIPLES OF THE DARK GODS**, while an example of their earlier involvement with the Haarlock Legacy can be found in The Haarlock Legacy Part I: **TATTERED FATES**.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following is a brief rundown of the principal characters found in **DEAD STARS** and their role in the adventure. More details about them can be found where they appear or in Appendix I: NPCs and Antagonists on page 58.

INQUISITOR SILAS MARR

A shadowy and powerful figure connected to the Calixian Conclave of the Inquisition, it is by Marr's agency and authority, and the co-operation of their own Inquisitor, that the Acolytes are dispatched to Mara.

FLAG CAPTAIN XAIL

A Battlefleet Calixis officer, he is the commander of the *Sigillite's Word*, the warship by which the Acolytes are sent to Mara.

SERGEANTS CHILDRES AND MAKRADE

Childres and Makrade are the sergeants commanding the Maccabian Janissary squads assigned to the Acolytes' personal command for their mission to Mara. Trained killers and faultlessly loyal, they do their utmost to fight for the Acolytes and lay down their own lives if needs be in the God Emperor's service.

ASTROPATH SILINUS

An experienced Astropath of senior years and servant of the Holy Ordos, this brittle, haughty but powerful Psyker has been assigned to the Acolytes' authority, although she quietly resents it.

SPECTRE CELL 17

If the Acolytes have encountered the Shadow Agent group Spectre Cell 17 before, and any of them survived, one good idea is to choose one of them and add him to Herrod's retinue to increase this adventure's continuity with the past. That survivor, in the right circumstances, can also relate the story of just how the Amaranthine Syndicate came to know of the Tesseract's existence!

SIRE CALIUM SAMIEL

A battle-psyker and agent of the Inquisition, he has been assigned to assist the Acolytes in their mission to Mara.

NOVATOR BENHAMIN NOSTROMO

Once Erasmus Haarlock's Navigator, Nostromo is now a cursed and mysterious relic, damned to an endless existence of suffering within the bounds of the ice station. He knows much and can be of great help to any who wish to find the Blind Tesseract, but is likewise a doomed figure and dangerous to trust.

INQUISITOR HERROD, LEGATE OF THE TYRANTINE CABAL

Inquisitor Herrod is a cybernetically resurrected monster who serves as a living weapon for the Tenebrae Collegium. Once a lauded and famous Inquisitor, his existence is now little more than a dark and hollow echo of his former glory, and largely secret even from others in the Holy Ordos. He has come to Mara with a retinue of shadow agents with the express purpose of capturing Haarlock and anything he might have pertaining to the Tyrant Star. He will stop at nothing to accomplish this, including deceiving or even murdering fellow agents of the Inquisition in order to do so.

Herrod is accompanied by a retinue of chosen Acolytes sworn to his service. Those surviving are: Quin Valentine, a gunslinger; Alianna Switch, a former gang enforcer; Junt Yaeger, a naval armsman; and Darkly Hand, an assassin.

MISS BOOK

Miss Book is the name taken by the human skin-suit form worn by a Slaughter Destructor of the Amaranthine Syndicate sent to Mara. Coldly analytical in intelligence and utterly ruthless, her (or rather its) mission is to destroy Haarlock or otherwise permanently prevent his return. If the situation warrants, she bargains with other factions or negotiates a temporary truce as long as it expedient to do so in search of her goals. Ultimately, however, she seeks to destroy any that cross her path. Most of her servants have no clue about her true nature and will recoil in horror when they discover it.

ENCOUNTERS WITH MISS BOOK

Miss Book and her agents of the Amaranthine Syndicate are not placed in any one area for an encounter—instead, they are intended to represent a “roving threat” and opportunity for the player characters. Miss Book carries a Grey Skin Psalter, a key element to the adventure. However, an encounter with her and her retainers could be quite deadly for the Acolytes. Therefore, the Game Master should use his discretion as to when and where the Acolytes end up in a confrontation with Miss Book.

Below are listed a number of suggestions for a likely moment for Miss Book to make an appearance:

- The Sentries at the Gate (see page 31)
- Crossfire (see page 35)
- Turncoat (see page 38)
- The Eaters of The Dead (see page 50)

CAPTAIN AEDRIK

Aedrik is an Amaranthine raider captain, heavily built and well-skilled in combat. Fully aware of just what he serves, he has long been dead inside; a creature without hope or passion and fatalistic, but obedient to his ‘mistress.’ Aedrik does as he is told, without fear or contradiction, knowing well the dreadful price of disobedience. Kill or negotiate, torture or save, it doesn’t matter to him, and he happily serves as a go between for his mistress and the Acolytes if need be, or executes any mercenaries who turn on their masters.

KORT LUTHER

Luther is a mercenary and reclaimator hired by the Syndicate for their mission to Mara. Lured by a fat purse and the chance to see the forbidden world, he is already regretting his decision. Luther has already parted company with his previous employers when the Acolytes encounter him and may join up with the Acolytes, if they let him, as the ‘sanest’ option available to him.

GHAST ‘PRIESTKILLER’

A false prophet of the Pilgrims of Hayte, bloodthirsty and insane, Ghast is stranded in the haunted cold hell of Mara after his own faction failed its attempt to seize the Haarlock Legacy for its own. Slowly being killed by the warp-predator larvae in his brain, he remains a savage and dangerous sorcerer.

THE IRON DAUGHTER

Another of Haarlock’s victims, the Iron Daughter is a soul condemned and bound to Haarlock’s great machine in the Blind Tesseract.

QUENEAS STILES

An Imperial Preacher, he is the last honest soul on Sinophia Magna in a future given over to a battle against the shadows.

FIHAD CONSTANTINE

A former ally of the Acolytes and future servant of the Holy Ordos and traitor, he is encountered in a place and time that may yet come to pass.

EPHRAM RYDER

Clan Father of the Ryder Holdfast on far Dusk, he is a potential friend or foe at the end of the line.

THE DUSK HAG

A being of dark and ancient power.

ERASMUS HAARLOCK

Infamous Rogue Trader and master of the Haarlock Legacy. The night traveller returning.

THE ICY HAND OF DEATH

Although the ice station is located in the planet’s most habitable zone, the cold on Mara is as likely to kill the unwary and unprepared as any horror lurking in the dark. To represent the dangers of exposure to the extreme cold of Mara apply the following rules:

- Clothing and armour that provides protection from extreme cold include: very warm furs, sealed armour, or other heated clothing. Any hit location that is not covered in this way by protective clothing designed to withstand extremely low temperatures is considered to be ‘exposed.’
- When on the surface of Mara any character who has any location exposed to the cold must make an immediate **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test**. The Resistance (Cold) Talent and other similar Talents or Traits apply to this test. If the character fails the test, he suffers 1d5+1 (E) Damage and a level of Fatigue. The GM should use his discretion for how often an exposed character must Test again (usually once per Round). Note that the Critical Tables for energy damage should be suitably modified to reflect the fact that the damage is being done by extreme cold rather than extreme heat or burning chemicals. When inside (within the Ice Station and mines) or away from artificial warmth or life support, any character that has a location that is exposed for more than twenty minutes must test as above.
- Any character with the Survival Skill can be assumed to know the above once he has seen and felt the conditions on Mara. The character may also make a **Challenging (+0) Survival Skill Test** when another character is taking damage from exposure to the cold. If he succeeds, he reduces the damage the character takes by an amount equal to his Intelligence Bonus. Reducing damage in this way has no effect on the Fatigue inflicted by exposure to the cold.

ICE STATION MARA

The following represents an overview of the ice station complex. Based on what the Inquisition knows (or guesses) about this place and its current status, the GM should feel free to relate it either in whole or in part to the players as well as use it for general reference. The information within this section becomes less accurate and detailed the farther down it explores Mara's depths.

OVERVIEW OF THE COMPLEX

Ice Station Mara is an abandoned and empty place with a dark past and darker secrets waiting to trap the unsuspecting and punish anybody that would mock its dangers. It is a cursed maze of steel, rockcrete and ice with a twisted mind and soul of its own; oppressive, spiteful and watching. It is dead and cold, and its very nature kills the unprotected and the unwary. However, the real danger lies in what lurks waiting unseen in the shadows.

While some of the station's structures exist above ground, its bulk lies buried below the ice crusted surface, sunken into the subsurface ice flows and dense rock. The Ice Station was founded as a penal colony for the worst recidivist elements in the sector and it is by the labour of thousands of these condemned souls that the vast subterranean complex was created. Many died in the dark and cold for the mining operation to survive under the iron fist of the Adeptus Arbites. Now it is an echoing warren of tunnels, shafts, cells, machine rooms and forgotten chambers where unseen and unhallowed creatures born of nightmares crawl.

The warp is thin and fractured on Mara, radiating outwards from its empty heart, and the structure of the Ice Station shifts and reconfigures itself in dimensions beyond the sight of mortal vision. As a result, time and space do not always function as they should; rooms submerged in darkness and biting cold suddenly spring to life and power without seeming cause or explanation, only to be plunged back into abyssal chill without warning. On many occasions ghostly signals and lost voices have been reported to be heard in its empty corridors and vox-waves. Other warp-related phenomena, often of a more dangerous type, have also been frequently encountered.

To this shadowy and abandoned half-world have been drawn terrible predatory things that dwell in the Warp and look on the minds of mortals as bloody flesh oozing gore into the water that they move through. These predatory, often mindless entities are no less dangerous for their lack of purpose and are drawn to feast on the flesh and souls of the living with frenzied, carnal abandon.



SURFACE STRUCTURES

Only a small proportion of the station exists above ground. Most of the Ice Station, which once held up to fifty thousand inmates, exists below ground. What does exist above ground are the structures required for the supply of the station and its governance in the Arbitrator's Fortress Tower. The Ice Station has long been abandoned and all of its structures are ice-caked, half buried in drifting snow and many bear scars of violence and battle (see Map I: The Mara Complex (Surface) on page 71).

THE OUTER WALLS

The surface elements of the Ice Station are ringed by a high wall made of rockcrete and steel, topped by great barbed spikes that curve inwards. The wall has no major gate, only a series of heavily armoured sally ports, most of which stand open and half clogged with ice drifts. The wall has been broken in several places (though these breaches are the work of violent events of the past), and has been worn down by the wind. In places, the frozen ice drifts have mounted against it so that it is almost completely submerged.

THE LANDING PADS & CONTROL COMPLEX

The Landing Pads are a sequence of large octagonal sections of prefabricated metal, each about twelve metres across, rising four metres into the air atop closed metal towers built to receive landing craft and prison shuttles from orbit. The petals of armour fringing their edge are hung with icicles as long as an arm. Surrounding them are support towers and crane units that once contained the hoists that would take supplies to and from the landing pad into the levels beneath the ground; these mechanisms have long since iced over into an unmoveable mass. Nearby, on a raised area of rock, a small control complex sits, complete with a badly damaged uplink transceiver dish. Within the complex is a shambolic mess of half-repaired and crudely re-routed systems, the signs of conflict and damage both old and relatively recent. The complex has a barely functional life support system and had clearly been used by some past expeditions to Mara as a base of operations. Service tunnels leading from the complex snake their way into the sub-levels of the station in the general area of the utility section.

THE FORTRESS TOWER

The Fortress Tower is an arcing blade of black rockcrete that rises high into the skies of Mara. This darkened sentry, its firing slits shuttered by metal, looms above the surrounding structures of the surface compound dominating the scene. This tower was the controlling heart of the Ice Station, where the arbiter garrison lived separated from the subsurface complex by blast hatches. Its control rooms, dormitories and armouries are still, silent, and icy, mostly deserted and stripped bare apart from the remnants of the Ice Station's last watch. Those brave souls who volunteered to act as rearguard during

the evacuation remain at their posts. Desiccated corpses still clutching weapons lurk in the shadows and eyeless skulls stare at blank and lifeless pict-screens.

The lower levels of the Fortress Tower lead down to the Panopticon.

THE ENGINARIUM STORES

This cluster of rounded hanger-like buildings and control towers were used as warehouses to store equipment: both that needed to keep the surface compound clear of ice and snow and machinery supplies for the ice station. Broken and open to the elements, these buildings are now echoing caverns filled with the half-seen shapes of machines and storage crates covered in thick layers of drift ice. Close inspection shows them to have been ruptured from within by explosive charges some years ago.

THE SUBSURFACE COMPLEX

The subsurface levels of Ice Station Mara are reached through access points beneath the landing pad control complex and the Fortress Tower. Beyond the armoured blast doors, air locks and portcullises of the surface buildings, the Ice Station descends downwards in layers of ever increasing darkness

WHY IS THE ICE STATION VIEWED AS A CURSED PLACE?

The empty darkness at the heart of the ice world is old beyond the life of many stars in the region and has existed long before the penal colony was founded by the Adeptus Arbites. Scholars of the obscure within the Holy Ordos have known of the strangeness of Mara since the founding of the sector, but it was not until the penal colony was attacked that the full potential threat was revealed to them. Mara has always been a very bad place, and many stories surround it, passed on secretly in the Calixis sector, particularly amongst the void born. Their tales say that the Warp is thin around Mara, like a skim of ice over a pool of water filled with ripper fish. When the first explorations were made of Mara, they were beset by misfortune: disappearances, strange phenomena and visions. It was, some say, the mine workings beneath the Ice Station that stirred the nightmare to life and truly made Mara a cursed place. The sealed records of Inquisitor Ark Ashtyn theorised that the population of malcontents, and the violence that surrounded them in the penal colony, reached a kind of 'critical mass' of psychic malice that shredded the thin membrane of reality and let ancient and slumbering horrors through. Regardless of the truth, the stories have persisted both among the superstitious void born and those who serve the Holy Ordos for decades, and in some cases centuries.

and disorder. The upper portions, those closest to the surface, contained the cells of the penal workforce, as well as medical facilities, refectories, service vaults, and the machinery used in the processing of the raw ore mined from deep below. Many of these areas still retain some trickle of power to maintain their emergency lighting and sustainable life support, but others are plunged entirely into cold darkness. As the levels descend and begin to give way to the mine itself, the iron-like order slowly gives way to the tangled, icy decay of half-collapsed ruins and wreckage. While the upper levels have walls and chambers clad in rockcrete or metal, the lower levels are made up of tunnels and caves of undressed rock, propped with rusting metal stanchions and clad in corrugated metal sheeting. The hoarfrost of frozen atmosphere and the signs of violent disorder and bloodshed can be found everywhere. The very fabric of the place seems twisted and unwholesome. Corridors begin to be cut off by sudden deadfalls, collapsed gantry ways, unexpected dead ends and impenetrable black voids into which no lights shine. No reliable map exists of the shifting labyrinth of the lower levels, and any attempt to create one is doomed to failure. Map II: The Mara Complex (Below Ground) on page 72 provides a general idea of the Ice Station's layout.

THE CELL BLOCK LAYERS

The cells which housed most of Ice Station Mara's vast population of prisoners are small, with barely space to lie down. Each one is closed by a solid door of armoured metal. Ten identical layers of cells splay out from the central Panopticon beneath the Fortress Tower on the surface. Each layer holds banks of five hundred cells and is distanced from the Panopticon by a kilometre-long corridor of rockcrete and barrier doors that could be sealed as tightly as any tomb should the need arise. On each cell layer, sub-complexes stretched out like the spokes of a wheel, equipping each layer-block with its own laundry, sanitation, ablution, and refectory areas along with bleakly stern chapels where the nature of sin and redemption through toil would be hammered into the prisoners. Unlike most of the rest of the complex, the cell-layers were heated by thick pipes threaded through the rockcrete-lined walls from one cell to another and back to the great stream reservoirs held beneath the Station's plasma reactors. Each cell block could be isolated and cut off at will; condemning the inmates to a chill death should the authorities wish it.



THE PANOPTICON

At the centre of the subsurface levels, at the hub of the endless corridors of cells, sits an open shaft into which the great corridors to the cell-layers open. This shaft houses the only means of entering the cell corridors—caged hoists that lift prisoners to the mouth of a corridor and then pull away. This is the only exit from the mines below. Down the centre of the shaft hangs a slender tower like an iron stalactite. Mirroring the Fortress Tower on the surface above, this inverted tower housed banks of pict-screens and vox-thief relays linked to every cell and chamber above the mines. This is the Panopticon. From here, Arbitrator gaolers and banks of slaved servitors saw and heard everything that passed in the Ice Station and controlled access to the lower levels.

THE UTILITY COMPLEX

Set aside from the cell blocks and the Panopticon and accessible both from the Fortress Tower and the landing control buildings on the ice station's surface, this tangled conglomeration of metal and concrete chambers, corridors and landings once housed the sub-level's maintenance and victual stores, infirmary and air reprocessing facilities. Of all the upper levels it bears the greatest visible scars, having been heavily marked by weapon damage and gutted by fire at least once in the past. There are relatively few bodies here, however. Some areas show signs of more recent habitation, but are once more abandoned, their occupants seemingly vanished without trace.

THE MINE LEVELS

The mines of Mara extend down in a vast, unmapped warren where reality itself bends and buckles around any that walk there. Tunnels of gouged and blasted rock slope ever downward—in some places so wide that ten men could walk abreast, in others so narrow that anyone passing through them must stoop and edge forward—joining together a web of vast natural caverns and galleries inside which a Titan could walk upright. This maze-like web of tunnels was dug out of the cold rock of Mara by prisoner labourers who died in their thousands to rip the ore from the flesh of the planet. Those few that have descended this far since the station's abandonment report that the mine's drilling machinery can be found in places, sometimes looming over impenetrable and fathomless pit-shafts like great dead beasts of metal, their carcasses left to freeze. Great smooth-bored shafts pass from these irregular tunnels to barred openings on the surface where vast fans circulated the freezing air through the mine. In many places, the mine tunnels have collapsed and in others they are unstable and dangerous. Nothing lives in the mines: no hardy vermin, lichen or fungus thrives. The only organic matter is the shredded and frozen corpses found amongst their discarded tools and wrecked machinery.



SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF ICE STATION MARA

When standing on the surface of Mara, all one can hear is the roaring wind and the soft, muffled crunch of ice beneath one's feet. All around, a cold white landscape stretches into the distance; its wind sculpted ice dunes cast dark shadows from the harsh pale light of the sun that burns without warmth when the sky is clear. When the sky is shrouded, it is usually by an all-encompassing ice storm in which nothing can be seen beyond an arm's length and the wind driven ice crystals patter against armour like needle points.

The Ice Station itself is a bleak, maze-like warren of dark tunnels, empty rockcrete rooms, bare rock, and metal gantries. It was designed as an Imperial prison, its very architecture created to enforce obedience and instill fear in its inmates. It was dreaded long before the horror took it and the decades of darkness, cold and neglect followed. It is universally either claustrophobic or cyclopean in design—cold and shrouded for the most part in darkness. Bodies, usually frozen and dry, are scattered throughout the rooms and tunnels. Everything is still and silent; any noise sounds many times louder. Occasional noises of static like buzzing and muffled half-heard words can be perceived from around corners only to fade to silence when the source is sought. The deeper one goes, the stranger and more unnatural things get; at times doors and corridors seem to have re-arranged themselves when a traveller wishes to double back, objects move without human intervention, lightless voids are found where once open rooms stood, and power and heat suddenly flares up without explanation only to die away just as suddenly.

The GM should play up the feeling that the Acolytes are interlopers in an unnatural hunting ground. The longer they stay, the more they attract attention to themselves and the greater the sense that whatever lurks in the deep dark heart of Mara wakes and comes for them.

THE GENERATORIA COMPLEX

Somewhere deep in the mine levels is the complex of plasma reactors and hydrothermal engines that kept the ice station supplied with vital, life-giving heat and power. Their location is now lost; old technical readouts of the station schematics no longer trustworthy on the matter.

THE DARK GALLERIES

The lowest mine levels of the ice station complex were vast, open shafts bored into the depths of the planet from huge vaulted cavern galleries discovered more than a kilometre below the surface, penetrating far into the dead rock of Mara. Since the massacre and the abandonment of the ice station, no expedition recorded by the Inquisition sent to find these lowest levels has ever returned.



BURNING HEAVENS

BY THE WRIT OF THE
HOLY ORDOS

•

INTERLUDE IN THE VOID

•

ARMING FOR THE
APOCALYPSE

•

ARRIVAL IN THE MARA
SYSTEM

•

RETURN TO REALITY

CHAPTER I: BURNING HEAVENS

"Emperor, we abjure thee guard our souls; from the jaws of the Kraken, from the terror by night, from the void's cold kiss and the daemon's false light..."

—Calixian Void Prayer

DEAD STARS begins with the Acolytes invested with the authority of the Holy Ordos, given command of an Inquisitorial combat mission and dispatched on a fast warship to the secret location of the Blind Tesseract in the depths beneath the frozen surface of the ice world Mara. This forbidden place is important to Erasmus Haarlock in his plans to undo his cursed past. The Acolytes mission is simple: discover the final secret of Haarlock's Legacy and prevent others who are seeking it from claiming its power for themselves. Imbued with holy purpose and armed as paragons of war, the Acolytes arrival into the Mara system finds them amidst a battle between the vessels of rival seekers of Haarlock's Legacy. The destruction of their ship and the words of a dying ally cause the Acolytes, and the Inquisitorial forces they command, to descend to the icy surface of Mara through a rain of fire and wreckage tumbling from the dark skies.

BY THE WRIT OF THE HOLY ORDOS

For the players, **DEAD STARS** begins with them already en route to Mara aboard the warship *Sigillite's Word*. It is up to the GM on how this flows into the ongoing events of his own campaign. The Acolytes should be sent on this mission with the full blessing of their Inquisitor (whoever that may be and if they serve one), and under the authority of a mysterious and powerful figure within the Holy Ordos named Inquisitor Silas Marr. GMs may wish to create an additional special encounter with the Acolytes' usual superiors within the Inquisition; briefing them in secret and in detail about the mission ahead and what is expected of them.

As a part of this briefing the following information, as well as the brief planetary reference for Mara, a writ of authority of Inquisitor Marr and a sealed Inquisitorial report are given to them. They are also informed that these should be regarded as 'untrustworthy' (See Player Handouts I, II, and III on pages 68-70).

- The Acolytes are being dispatched, with full writs of authority, to Mara, known by secret lore within the Holy Ordos to be the location of the so-called 'Blind Tesseract.'

- The Blind Tesseract has been identified as the locus of what has become known as the 'Haarlock Legacy' (most likely by the Acolytes' previous efforts), and the last known location of Erasmus Haarlock.
- Transit to Mara is forbidden by order of the Conclave Calixis, usually even to the servants of the Inquisition. The Acolytes, along with their subordinates have been granted access due to the seriousness of the matter.
- Mara was the site of an Imperial mining penitentiary which was overrun and abandoned due to a growing series of warp incursions resulting in the deaths of more than twenty thousand inmates in 768.M41. During this catastrophe, Inquisitor Ark Ashtyn, who was called in during the incursion, theorised that the human presence on Mara formed some kind of psychic 'critical mass' which, in combination with local conditions, created a spiralling implosion of nightmarish unreality, involving the predations of Psycheneuein Warp entities.
- Since the massacre, the ice station has been an empty 'haunted' shell, noted for periodic warp disturbances and reality incursions. The state of 'activity,' although largely unpredictable, appears to worsen the more that living creatures are within its vicinity and the more violence and negative emotion that are visited within its confines.



- After the abandonment of the penitentiary on Mara, a bombardment squadron was dispatched to shatter the planet's crust using cyclonic torpedoes in the hope of ending the potential threat. The squadron disappeared under unknown circumstances and since then, the Inquisition has declared the world forbidden and maintained a blockade of the outer Mara system. Small expeditions have successfully travelled to Mara and reported various mysterious and often contradictory phenomenon and ongoing danger. Larger landings, both deliberate and accidental (such as the infamous incident of the troopship Vervilix which made a forced landing on Mara in 810.M41; see page 34 of the **INQUISITOR'S HANDBOOK** for more details), have all met with utter disaster.
- The Acolytes' authority has been granted directly under the seal of Lord Inquisitor Caidin, master of the Conclave Calixis himself, at the request of Inquisitor Marr who has taken a special interest in the Haarlock matter.
- The matter is to be pursued with great dispatch, and the warship *Sigillite's Word* has been placed at their disposal to ferry them to Mara.
- The eyes of the Holy Ordos are upon them; failure is not an option.
- The Acolytes are also furnished with information on what is known about Mara and the Blind Tesseract as part of a writ from Inquisitor Marr (See Appendix II: Player Handouts on page 69).

HAARLOCK CONNECTION

It is likely that players coming into **DEAD STARS** have played Acolytes involved in investigating the Haarlock Legacy in one of its previous episodes (The House of Dust and Ash, **TATTERED FATES**, or **DAMNED CITIES**); they may even be lucky enough to be playing the same Acolytes as they were when they began the campaign. If this is the case, the Acolytes

BRIDGING INTO THE ADVENTURE

When tying the start of the adventure into his own campaign, the GM can simply have the Acolytes be assigned the mission of going to Mara as presented here, or make the discovery of the information leading to Mara a small adventure in itself. While the fact that the Blind Tesseract was Haarlock's ultimate destination can be learned at the end of the adventure **DAMNED CITIES**, but the Blind Tesseract's presence on Mara is known to very few, and most of those are members of the Holy Ordos of the Inquisition, but this need not be either the Acolytes' own Inquisitor or even the mysterious Inquisitor Marr.

Obtaining this information of their own accord could be well within the means and desires of an independently-minded group of player-characters. Once they know that they need to go to Mara for the answers they seek, they can present the information to their chain of command, who then gives them the resources and authority they need to pursue their lead.

WHO IS INQUISITOR MARR?

Marr is a shadowy figure at best, a powerful Inquisitor who, it is said, never strays from the centre web of information gatherers and spies situated in the Halls of the Chancellery Court on Solomon. Dubious of repute and only tentatively connected with the Calixian Conclave, it is known that many powerful factions within the Holy Ordos fear and respect him, however grudgingly.

Although he is not involved 'in the flesh' in this adventure, Acolytes who took part in the affair of the House of Dust and Ash on Solomon have already met Marr and likely formed their opinions accordingly.

(and by extension the players) may already know much of Erasmus Haarlock and have uncovered the fact that he could only find the key to what he desired by venturing to the Blind Tesseract on Mara (see The Blind Tesseract and the Climax of the Campaign section on page 70 of **DAMNED CITIES**). In this case, it can be assumed that it is these discoveries that have moved the Acolytes' master to send them to Mara and to give them such aid as he can.

If the Acolytes have, for whatever reason, not been involved in the Haarlock's Legacy campaign, then they are dispatched to Mara to bring the whole affair to a close following the demise of another Acolyte team, perhaps on Sinophia or following the events surrounding the destruction of the House of Dust and Ash on Solomon. The GM is encouraged to work in the results of any previous adventures having to do with Haarlock's Legacy.

INTERLUDE IN THE VOID

When ready to have the events aboard ship begin, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"You are aboard the strike frigate Sigillite's Word, sent with all speed to the long-forbidden world of Mara, a world of ice, secrets, and death. You have been sent because it has been discovered that the long-vanished Erasmus Haarlock sought a place called the Blind Tesseract in the process of pursuing his one true desire. Some among the Inquisition have long known of the Blind Tesseract and that its entrance lies far below the surface of the cursed ice world of Mara. The mysterious and powerful Inquisitor Marr is one of these few, and through him, your own Inquisitor has learned of it. You can still remember his face growing grim as he talked of the Blind Tesseract as a place of lost knowledge where time and space are bound by strange devices.

Under High authority, you have been given power and command over a mission: to discover what Haarlock's designs were and prevent his secrets from falling into the hands of any other who would discover them. Your master tells you that he can trust no other hand to this task, and if he or others of prominence within the Ordo were to make the journey, even in secrecy, the risks would be all the greater. So it is ordained that you must succeed if the Haarlock's dread legacy is not to bring ruin on all."

Once the Acolytes have been told where they are, and why, they have a two day voyage onboard a very fast warship of the Calixian Battlefleet, bound to the Holy Ordos by oaths of allegiance and loyalty. In real terms this brief interlude of travel in the void should take no more than half an evening's play, and is there to give the players a chance to remind themselves of the pertinent points of the campaign, talk over the information provided in their briefings and to prepare. Though the Acolytes cannot stray beyond the hull of the ship, this time can be used to study information and for the GM to seed whatever additional information or plot threads he sees fit before the turbulent events into which the Acolytes are being thrust begin in earnest.

The GM should use this time to give the players information and allow them to find out more about where they are going and why. It is worth making sure that the players are informed and clear about what is going on and why at this point. Information about the Haarlock Legacy, what has happened, and who else is involved in pursuing it, is particularly important. The GM should also take some time to prepare what he needs regarding the three elements that are needed to find and interact with the Blind Tesseract. See page 26 for information on the three elements and their significance.

The atmosphere that the GM should be trying to create while the Acolytes are on board the *Sigillite's Word* is one of calm purpose, with an emphasis on everything being in tight control on the ship. The players (and their Acolyte alter egos) should feel that they have the initiative and are being given an opportunity to make sure they have everything they need. This state is, of course, a lie: the feeling of everything being under control serves to make the sudden change of pace and circumstances a more enjoyable effect when the ship reaches Mara.

AUTHORITY AND SUBORDINATES

The Acolytes are in charge: they have been given authority from the Inquisition to seek out anything related to Haarlock on Mara and are granted a ceremonial Inquisitional Rosette to show they act with the conclave's blessing. They have also been charged with leading the mission to bring the affair to a successful close and the responsibility for this rests on their shoulders. What this amounts to is an overwhelming sense of duty, and a number of things have been given to them to aide them in their task. These resources include the warship *Sigillite's Word* to carry them, and two other experienced Acolytes with ten elite soldiers under their direct command to take down to the surface with them. (If they ask about more troops, tell them that the total number of their party matches that of the largest ever group known to have made planetfall since the death of the colony and survive to tell the tale, and Marr's orders on the matter take precedence.)

The two other Acolytes, Silinus and Samiel, and the ten elite Maccabian Janissaries joined the player-characters when they embarked on the *Sigillite's Word*. Give broad outlines of the character and nature of these subordinates to the players once it is appropriate.

The Maccabian Janissaries

The Acolytes have command of a ten strong force of elite troopers drawn from the renowned Janissary Cadres of the Imperial Guard. These regiments are raised from the arid planet of Maccabeus Quintus, a place of fierce and stoic people and iron-strong puritan faith in the Imperial Creed. The Conclave Calixis has oath bonds with the fifth Maccabian regiment and has called on the honour debts owed to them to procure the services of ten of the most resolute and effective soldiers in the sector, lead by two experienced NCOs. The Janissaries are tough and battle-hardened men and women who are bound by oaths made in seven shrines on Maccabeus Quintus. They see serving the Emperor's will as a sacred duty and have a grim attitude; they are not given to frivolity or humour. They spend much of their time preparing for their mission, either performing combat drills or weapons maintenance, in prayer or studying information on the environment and situation of the station on Mara.

They are respectful and deferential to the Acolytes, who they see not only as their commanders but as instruments of the Golden Throne's divine will. They are not, however, mindless, and in particular do not countenance overtly blasphemous or heretical behaviour in their presence without difficulties. Commanding the squad's two five-man sections are the imposing and iron-hard sergeants Childres and Makrade, both combat veterans with experience in fighting at the Inquisition's side.

The names of the other Janissaries are; Gaius, Helenith, Kraven, Arco, Sufal, Nauls, Cars'son, and Janaad.



Astropath Kessa Silinus

Silinus is a proud and haughty woman of many years experience serving the Imperium and recently the Holy Ordos of the Inquisition. Slightly stooped and in her late middle years, she has yellow parchment-like skin stretched across her thin frame, but is nevertheless exceptionally mentally tough. The gaze of the dark pits where her eyes were burnt out as she was soul bound to the power of the God Emperor are not easy to meet. Her manner is impatient and she is intolerant of inefficiency. Her hard demeanour is given an edge by the fact that she clearly thinks that she should not be in a subordinate position to the Acolytes, and her obedience to their orders, while formal and correct, is grudging at best.

Calium Samiel

Samiel is a smooth, professional, and clearly cultured and well educated man, whose friendly demeanour belies the fact that he is a potent battle-psyker who has been killing enemies of the Imperium for over three decades. He is a lean and muscular man of middle years with dark receding hair and his careful manner is more like that of a noble administrator than a professional killer. Friendly and dedicated to serving the Inquisition, he is the primary conduit of additional information from their master to the Acolytes and is happy to spend time with them, spar in the armoury or simply be used as an information resource during the voyage. One of the reasons why Samiel has been assigned to the mission is that he has past combat experience against the Psycheneuein (although not on Mara), believed to be one of Mara's principal dangers, and knows the basic facts of their abilities and feeding habits. (The GM should free to use some of the descriptive text rather than the profiles presented on page 353 of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook as a basis of his knowledge).

When presenting and playing Samiel it is helpful if the Acolytes form a good impression of him (the contrast to the cynical and proud Silinus can be helpful in creating this impression). The reason that it is important that the Acolytes like him is that it increases the effect when Samiel makes a sudden fatal exit at the end of the prologue (see the Last Words entry on page 24 in this section).

THE SIGILLITE'S WORD

The ship which has been put at the Acolytes' disposal for their mission, and on board which they begin this adventure, is the Tempest Class Strike Frigate *Sigillite's Word*. It is a small (comparatively speaking), very fast warship which is part of Battle Fleet Calixis and has a distinguished history and many battle honours. It has frequently been used for operations of "special circumstance" by the Inquisition as part of a long-term understanding between certain Inquisitors and senior officers of Battlefleet Calixis. The *Sigillite's Word* is under the command of Captain Abner Xail, a relatively young but experienced and highly capable naval officer whose star is on the rise thanks to his extreme competency commanding a warship, good family and easy charm. The ship itself is a kilometre long dart of armour, bristling weapons ports, and roaring engines filled with thousands of souls whose single purpose is to make it an instrument of the Emperor's wrath.

The *Sigillite's Word* is a fine ship and it has also benefitted from the service it has done the Holy Ordos. In return for its service, and with the understanding that it may be called upon to serve the needs of the Inquisition again, it has received a number of refits under the supervision of the Lathe-Magos of the Adeptus Mechanicus. Additionally, it always receives the most experienced crew and finest officers as well as the very best navigators. Sleek and deadly, it is one of the finest ships of war of its rating within the Calixis Sector.

The interior spaces of the *Sigillite's Word* are vast, with hundreds of crew cells, enginarium halls, armouries, launch bays and chambers dedicated to every task that keeps the metal beast of war alive. On the lower decks it is a maze of tight passages; stained metal filled with the reek of engine oil and human living. On the higher decks, closer to the bridge and governing functions of the ship, the rawness of existence on a warship is less, but everywhere one can feel the fabric of the ship hum to the thrust of its engines and creak in the ephemeral tides as it passes through the Warp.

The Acolytes and all their subordinates are quartered in fine style close to the ship's bridge and the captain's quarters. All their needs are seen to by junior officers and blue robed servitors, with their every request being dealt with to the utmost extent possible. At some point in the course of their passage to Mara, Captain Xail invites the Acolytes to formally dine with him in his quarters. This episode can be dealt with in as brief or detailed a fashion as preferred; it can act as a perfect context in which to impart and discuss the information that the players should have before they reach Mara and to perhaps have Xail relate void tales of the haunted system.

Two things that Xail says should, however, be emphasised to the Acolytes. First, the Navigators are going to attempt to put them further in system than would be normal; this is only attemptable because of the outstanding ability of the Navigators assigned to the *Sigillite's Word*. He wants to ensure that once they are in real space they can reach Mara itself as quickly as possible. As Mara is very close to the edge of its star system, this should only take a matter of hours after they exit the warp. Second, the reason for this aggressive approach is that he thinks it likely that enemies and rivals may already be there when the *Sigillite's Word* arrives.

Part of Xail's own mission briefing has been the possibility of hostile ships of unknown type and specification willing to contest their attempt to land the Acolytes and their subordinates on the planet. The captain, however, exhibits confidence that they will succeed saying that, "*The Word has bested many enemies of the Golden Throne, and in this service, she shall not fail.*"

ARMING FOR THE APOCALYPSE

The Acolytes are commanding an Inquisitorial combat mission and are heading into more trouble than they have ever encountered. Mara is a place of nightmare and death that is quarantined by the Imperial Navy for a reason. Even without the involvement of a series of dangerous rival groups or the influence of the infamous Erasmus Haarlock, an expedition

to Mara is a death trap, haunted by ghosts and infested with malign warp entities. While the Acolytes may not fully grasp the fearsome situation they are going into, their Inquisitor is all too aware. As such, he has given them free access to material and equipment to an extent that should give them pause in itself.

Each Acolyte is given a hooded environmental bodyglove and respirator to sustain them in Mara's harsh conditions. Their chosen body armour (or if no armour is worn, their environmental bodyglove) is ritually infused with Hexagramatic Ward upgrades. Additionally, they receive twenty rounds of Blessed Ammunition for a projectile weapon of their choice. (See pages 189 and 190 in *The Holy Ordos* chapter of the **INQUISITOR'S HANDBOOK** respectively). If they do not possess such a weapon, a best quality stub revolver is gifted to them at the same time (See page 130 of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook).

Between the quartermasters of the Holy Ordos and the Master of Arms on the *Sigillite's Word*, the Acolytes have reasonable access to all arms, armour and relevant equipment with an availability rating of up to and including Rare from the Armoury chapter of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook and **INQUISITOR'S HANDBOOK**. This equipment is supplied at no cost in Thrones and should be limited only by the bounds of common sense: what can be located in the time allowed before departure, what might be useful and what they can carry, bearing in mind that rough ground and physical hardship is to be expected of the journey ahead.

Each Acolyte may also request and receive a single relevant personal item with an availability rating of Very Rare of their choice, again under the proviso that it could be reasonably obtained by the Holy Ordos in the time span allowed. They may also try to obtain additional Very Rare items, but should roll for each Very Rare item they request. There is a roughly 25% chance that the item they request can be supplied to them in time, diminishing by 1d5% per subsequent attempt per character.

To many GMs (and certainly to most players), this largesse might seem shockingly excessive, but it is both needed and useful. It is needed because what Mara and the rest of **DEAD STARS** has to throw at players is every bit as dangerous as can be imagined. It also is useful for creating the correct atmosphere; the Acolytes are in charge and trusted. As soon as they know that they have free access to the big guns, they should start to wonder what that implies about what they are going into. This last point is worth playing up with a few remarks about whether they are really sure they have all they need (up to what they can feasibly carry and use).

ENEMIES, RIVALS AND FOOLS

The Acolytes are furnished with information about the current efforts of the other factions known to be involved in the pursuit of Haarlock's Legacy. The GM should decide on what details (if any) of their activities to appraise the Acolytes of. While this should reflect the Acolytes' past experiences, the GM should feel free to sow some false leads and should not reveal exactly what's going to be waiting for them. Further information on some of the factions contesting the Legacy

can be found in the campaign guide on page 9. When giving information to the players on other factions, it is important to emphasise that it is believed that more than one of them knows the significance of Mara to the secret of Haarlock's Legacy and intends to reach it by any means they can.

THE QUARANTINE BLOCKADE

The Mara system is under an Inquisition imposed naval quarantine, and no vessel is allowed to approach or enter the system without authorisation from the Conclave Calixis. The quarantine itself is enforced by a squadron of system monitor craft and an assigned ship of the line; usually a light cruiser, which make unscheduled sweeps of the system's outer reaches periodically, minimizing their exposure to danger. Formidable though this quarantine force is, its position relative to the planet of Mara can vary as they have the entire system to patrol. The *Sigillite's Word* has been given Inquisitorial clearance codes that grant it authority to breach the quarantine; clearance codes that they transmit once the quarantine fleet responds to their presence. However, as a bridge officer wryly comments, it is likely to be some time after the *Sigillite's Word* has reached Mara and the Acolytes mission has made planetfall. Unfortunately as matters turn out, things are not going according to plan.

ARRIVAL IN THE MARA SYSTEM

For the ship's exit from the Warp into the Mara system, the Acolytes are invited to be present on the bridge by Captain Xail and are accompanied by their subordinates Silinus and Samiel. To give the Acolytes a sense of the bridge, read or paraphrases the following:

"The bridge is a cavernous vaulted chamber, with huge arched viewports that are sealed for the journey through the warp by thick metal shutters. The atmosphere on the bridge is like that of a temple of war; the sides are lined by niches, housing system controlling servitors that are lit by the green glow of the instrument panels they tend. Officers in the deep blue uniforms of Battlefleet Calixis pace between control lecterns, and the air is thick with incense and the muttered prayers of robed priests. Raised above all, on an armoured throne, the captain commands his ship."

The Captain and the bridge crew appraise the Acolytes about the progress towards exiting the warp into the Mara system and about preparations for the approach to the planet. Progress and state of readiness is excellent and transition from the warp is expected to occur within no more than ten minutes from the Acolytes' arrival on the bridge.

RETURN TO REALITY

Once the Acolytes have been on the bridge for a few minutes, activity amongst the crew increases as final preparations are made to exit the warp and return to real space. The captain orders that all sections be put on alert and that the weapons be readied for use. He also orders the guncutter assigned to transport the mission team to the surface be made ready for immediate launch. If asked why, he smiles and says that the Emperor rewards those who have not only faith but caution.

Once the ship is about to exit the Warp, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"The air is suddenly thick with a sickening greasy feeling, alarms sound and lights flicker, and flight servitors intone ritual prayers of safe passage from their vox-grills. The ship shudders as if it were a creature suddenly plunged into cold water, and then there is a moment of calm as the clammy feeling of translating from the Warp to the physical realm passes. An officer turns from the glowing readouts on his lectern and begins to apprise the captain of the ship's post-translation status in rapid void-cant.

Without warning the deck bucks beneath you, and the entire ship shudders as if it were a bell struck by a god. Sirens scream, the servitors begin a frantic chattering of data, and the incense-filled air turns red with the glow of warning lights as officers shout demands for information and bark out orders. The deck shakes again and the cacophony rises in intensity like rain falling harder and harder beneath the oncoming storm. A voice clear and firm rises above the chaos of noise:

"Raise Void Shields! Show me!" booms the voice of captain Xail, and a sheet of colour and light opens on the vast screen hung in the arches of the bridge's ceiling. It shows a magnified image of fire and debris blooming around a pale orb hanging in the darkness like a blind eye. Icons and fast scrolling data in red, green and blue spring up, overlaying the shifting images of streaking weapon discharge and the dagger-like forms of starships. Xail blinks at the tactical data for a second and rattles off a stream of orders. Pausing, he glances down at you and then back at the display. "It appears we are late for this particular feast, but fear not, I will get you down to Mara safely though all the Traitors of the Eye were to block our path!"

The vessels doing battle around the planet in bloody free-for-all include the Imperial blockade monitors and those of the rival factions, although just what ship belongs to which faction (aside from the blockade ships) is unknown at this time. The number of other spacecraft should be varied depending on the number of competing factions the GM intends to use in the adventure, but in particular the Syndicate has brought several pirate and mercenary vessels and Herrod's Tyrantines have a lithe and lethal looking cruiser of unusual design (the better to hide their identity) that's holding its own against the rest single-handed.

Captain Xail explains to the Acolytes that his intention is to punch through the ships embroiled in battle above Mara, and hold off whatever enemies turn their attentions to the *Sigillite's Word* while the Acolytes make the descent to the Ice Station

GAMING THE SPACE BATTLE

Rather than getting bogged down in minutia or risking making the players feel too much like bystanders during the valiant attempt by the *Sigillite's Word* to complete its mission, the GM can have them take on the role of the ship's gunners and helmsmen and make a few simple tests on their behalf. The ship's combined 'score' being tested is 70.

- Making a run to planetary orbit: Challenging (+0)
- Evading enemy fire: Difficult (-10)
- Engaging enemy ships: Challenging (+0)
- Final Approach: Difficult (-10)

While the GM can use the results of these tests to describe what's going on (good success engaging enemy ships can blow up an attacker, etc.), what it should be used to determine is the state that the *Sigillite's Word* is in when the Acolytes make planetfall. Note the net of the players' total degree of successes and failures for all the tests. A combined total of seven degrees of success or more means the ship manages to pull away, damaged but intact, from Mara's orbit and escape *The Spear of Destiny's* wrath. Less than this spells its fiery death shortly after the Acolytes' guncutter makes it clear.

on the surface. He then intends to fight his way free and hope to circle back and finish off any remaining vessels and extract the Acolytes later. Any Acolyte with knowledge of tactics or naval warfare, such as Knowledge (Tactica Imperialis), realises that this plan is extremely risky to the survival of the ship once it is close to the planet and trapped between it and its enemies. Should the Acolytes argue against the captain's bold but dangerous plan he firmly dismisses any objections, saying:

"To get you onto that planet is my sacred oath made in the name of the Golden Throne and worth this ship and the lives of every soul on it. I do not know why it is so, but understanding is not required, only duty and obedience."

FIRE AND DEATH

From the moment that the *Sigillite's Word* is in the Mara system and aware of the battle raging between rival forces above the planet, the GM must keep the pace of events fast and relentless. The sense of danger and urgency must be palpable and the players should not be given time to react to what is going on. Small details of frantic activity on the bridge and the looming image of the battle might be appropriate, but nothing more. The GM may also try to keep the player-characters involved by making skill tests to work out the details of the faction's ships, stand in for the *Sigillite's Word's* gunners and so on (see Gaming the Space Battle, above).

It does not take long at full speed to close with Mara and the heart of the battle. When this happens, read or paraphrase the following:

"The ship is being rocked and buffeted by the blast waves and weapon impacts all around it, and the main pict-viewer is now filled with the pale face of Mara, crossed with bright slashes of fire and the looming shapes of warring space craft."

"All batteries, independent fire! Rig for planetary approach! Put us in geostationary orbit above the Ice Station!"

Without warning you feel bile rise in your throats, the bridge flickers impossibly between light and darkness for a long second, and you stagger as if physically struck. The servitors, in their instrument niches, fall silent one after another and then speak as one in a choir of cracked voices: 'The Traveller shall return and the stars shall die. His servants come. The key turns.'"

Any psyker, including Silinus and Samiel, feels a massive disturbance in the warp, and after a moment, the servitors return to function and begin spewing out clamorous streams of data. After giving the player-characters a few moments to react, continue to read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"Something both dark and yet pale as a corpse passes across the view screen; a warship, Imperial in aspect but seemingly fashioned from cracked bone and granite-grey stone, iron-hard but at the same time insubstantial, like a reflection cast in dark water."

Data begins to scroll frantically across the view screen in livid red runes. The captain gazes at it, his jaw open, until he looks at you and says as if he cannot believe his own words:

'It is The Spear of Destiny! It is Haarlock's ship!'

Sickly lightning stabs out from the ghost ship and touches one of the warring vessels, which detonates in a massive explosion. The Sigillite's Word is rocked by the blast. In the void beyond, gun-tracers and missiles home in on the fearful interloper, which sails through them unscathed, lashing out and dealing destruction on every side.

Standing before his command throne, Captain Xail looks down at you and shouts, "Go! Get to the guncutter. We will get you as close to the planet as we can. Go! Do not argue! I will see my duty done!"

What then follows for the Acolytes is a headlong rush through the ship to the hanger decks; a terrifying journey through a ship that is ripping itself apart with every passing minute. Bulkheads are slamming shut as the Acolytes pass, frantic crewmen block corridors in frenzied and panicked packs. The air is filled with shouts, the grinding scream of tortured metal and the terrifying sound of burning. The GM may go into the flight through the dying ship in more detail—for example, allowing the Acolytes to grab extra gear from their quarters by being nimble, well organised, and clever—but it is generally best to give the players an impression of the frantic chaos of a ship that is being destroyed and to keep the pace of events fast.

LAST WORDS

Once the players reach the hanger deck where their guncutter is kept, read or paraphrase the following:

"The vast metal chamber of the hanger deck is filled with noise and fire. Smoke is pouring up to the ceiling and spreading across it in a thick black pall. Everywhere are knots of panic as crew try to load and launch craft into the vain safety of the void. Only one craft remains devoid of the chaos, its blunt, hunched form ringed by silver masked Maccabian Janissaries, their guns levelled."

As soon as you emerge onto the deck, one of them turns and signals to four more, who run to you ring you in a close guard and hurry you towards the lowered rear hatch of the guncutter, the engines of which are flaring with restrained power. As you reach the ramp the Janissaries are already boarding at a run.

The deck lurches and you can hear the conflagration bells begin to sound as a howling roar of fire rises and heat washes the backs of your necks. Before the hatch is closed or the last trooper on board, the guncutter is already rising from the deck, the blast doors to the void in front of it opening with a thunder of rushing air vented into the cold black. You can feel the power of the engines building, ready to push it into the void.

As the last trooper jumps onto the ramp, you can see fire falling in sheets beyond the closing hatch and just beyond that, the figure of Samiel is standing upright and still, his robes covered in a spreading layer of frost his eyes rolled back into his head, white and sightless.

"The key turns. The traveller returns. Lest all be lost" he intones in a cracked voice that is not his own.

The hatch slams shut and with a roar the engines fire the guncutter forwards towards the void. The last thing you glimpse through the viewport is Samiel standing amidst a sea of fire and howling air, his hand raised as if in farewell."

Those who escape the ship should include the Maccabian Janissaries, the Astropath Silinus, and the two navy crewmen piloting the guncutter. On board with the Acolytes are their special equipment chosen for the mission and some additional supplies loaded by sergeants Childres and Makrade (see the Readied for the Cold entry on page 31 for details of these additional pieces of equipment).

Depending on the circumstances (and if the Players made a few skill roles for the crew how well they did) The Sigillite's Word is completely consumed by fires within minutes of the guncutter departing and explodes in a star-bright ball of plasma, or manages to break away, spewing flames and trailing debris, her engines burning flank speed away from the orbital carnage above Mara. The guncutter begins the descent through Mara's atmosphere towards the location of the Ice Station and the final act of the Haarlock Legacy.



ICE STATION MARA

NIGHTMARE LABYRINTH

•

THE THREE ELEMENTS

•

ENEMIES AND ALLIES

•

FORGING ALLIANCES

•

THE HORRORS OF MARA

•

WINNING THE RACE

•

ARRIVING AT THE ICE
STATION

•

DESCENT THROUGH FIRE

•

ENCOUNTERS IN THE ICE
STATION

CHAPTER II: ICE STATION MARA

"There are dark pitted corners of our universe that have bred the most unfathomable horrors and blasphemies that would burn and blind the sanest man. Fortunately sanity has never been a prerequisite of membership in the Holy Ordos"

—Inquisitor Silas Marr

The bulk of this adventure takes place in the accursed and abandoned Ice Station on Mara. Viewed in the abstract, the Acolytes have the role of explorers and treasure-seekers, and the Ice Station itself can be rightly seen by the GM as a particularly deadly 'haunted house' which serves to provide a harsh backdrop against which the player-characters must race to find what they seek: the entrance to the Blind Tesseract by combining three elements to find its location. Along the way the Acolytes must survive not only the perils of the Ice Station itself (which are many), but must also best their rivals who also desire the Legacy and to uncover Mara's secrets.



The unnatural and Warp-tainted nature of the Ice Station complex and the realm below it reveals itself the deeper the Acolytes go within it. These secrets must be discovered by exploring the complex, and also, potentially, by interacting with the other factions who have come as their rivals. Of the other factions, some are outright enemies, some can be bargained with, and some may become allies, however temporary or untrustworthy.

Once they Acolytes find the entrance to the Blind Tesseract, they face a final test of courage and resolve. If they pass, they find themselves within the Blind Tesseract and facing the many choices it presents. How quickly the Acolytes gain access to the Blind Tesseract, and how effectively they have dealt with the other factions, determines whether they reach the Blind Tesseract first or whether others have reached it before them and are thus closer to reaching the final secret of Haarlock's Legacy than the Acolytes.

NIGHTMARE LABYRINTH

To reach the entrance to the Blind Tesseract, the Acolytes must journey deep into the lower levels of the Ice Station's generatoria sub-complex. Unfortunately, the ice station extends far down into the permafrost and rock of Mara and the further one goes down into its depths, the more of a labyrinth it becomes. This is a labyrinth not simply in a physical sense that exists in only three dimensions, but also where time, space, and the beyond become increasingly twisted and dangerous. The different parts of the Ice Station and mines beneath it exist out of phase with each other in the Warp-fractured reality of Mara: walking down the same passage twice does not always lead to the same place at the other end, and the same two chambers are not always connected to each other. It is possible to unwittingly shift from one splintered fragment of space and time to another simply by passing through chambers, passages, and doors in a different order or while holding different objects. This effect of constant, unnatural reconfiguration gets worse the deeper one goes into the station and mines, and somewhere within the tangle of possibilities is the entrance to the Blind Tesseract. All the Acolytes have to do is find it...

THE THREE ELEMENTS

Although it may be possible to find the entrance to the Blind Tesseract by chance, given Mara's deadly and confusing nature it is almost certain than anyone trying this approach will be dead long before success is likely. This is Haarlock's game, however, and Haarlock wanted the Tesseract to be found and activated again by those who would come after him. So, he has provided a 'trail of breadcrumbs' of sorts for others to follow in the shape of three different kinds of 'elements,' that in combination allows the correct path to be chosen. Haarlock left these elements, some of which are physical objects and some of which are information or secrets, scattered across his domains and former works (which either the Acolytes or their rivals have with them), while others may be found on Mara itself. The possession of one of each type of element leads those who hold them to the Tesseract should they survive the journey. These elements are as follows:

- A Pattern: A course to follow in the labyrinth below the ice station to find the entrance to the Blind Tesseract.
- A Guide: An individual to interpret the Pattern and provide instruction of what must be done inside the Blind Tesseract.
- A Talisman: A physical object attuned to Haarlock's power to be used as a key to activate Haarlock's engine in the Blind Tesseract.

None of these things are exactly what they seem; the Pattern, for example, is not a simple physical map of rooms, but a pattern of movements and actions within the ice station and mines. While the Guide may be a specific individual, it can also be a revelation on the part of one or more of the Acolytes. Although each may exist in different forms, this adventure details one element of each type fully, with the GM free to add in or modify his own.

It is important to note that there are many different potential elements, some of which the Acolytes may never have had access to or may be found in other hands. Thus, it is possible for their rivals to access the Blind Tesseract as well as the Acolytes by using a different set of elements. **DEAD STARS** is a race between different factions and it is possible for the Acolytes to succeed in finding the Blind Tesseract, but do so after their rivals depending on how they have performed (see Winning the Race on page 30).

ELEMENT 1: A PATTERN

The Pattern represents the physical steps that the Acolytes must make through the shifting environment of the Ice Station in order to reach the Doorway to Darkness, the chamber that provides the entryway to the Blind Tesseract itself. It is not a map of the physical layout of the Ice Station and mines. Rather it is a pattern of actions that must be performed in a certain order. If done correctly (with the correct guidance and accompanying key), it culminates in the entrance to the Blind Tesseract. The Acolytes do not need to be able to understand or interpret the Pattern themselves; the Guide (see below) does so itself. Without the Guide, the Pattern cannot be used.

The Grey Books of Haarlock

Haarlock gave the Pattern physical form by creating copies of his ancestor Solomon Haarlock's encrypted logbooks and imprinting the Pattern within them by occult means. These imprints each take the form of a battered but sizable prayer book of archaic style and design, bound in unidentifiable grey skin. Within their pages are a string of strange symbols and diagrams accompanying long stanzas of apparent nonsense (which read along the lines of "the three lords look and turning their eyes do burn, and burning to seize the cup"), that cover many pages. Anyone looking at the text who is able to read High Gothic and who has Knowledge (Imperial Creed) realise that it is gibberish, with words and phrases that are in the entirely wrong order and that some famous prayers and litanies contained within are rearranged in blasphemously satirical and mocking ways.

Each book is a two-edged deception. Hidden within the first 'layer' of encryption is some secret but highly valuable set of otherwise mundane information, such as secret void navigation charts, technological schematics or blasphemous lore. The real secret of the Pattern is contained within the seeming gibberish that hides what is written within.

This artefact may well be familiar to players who have played *The House of Dust and Ash*. They may already have encountered, or be in possession of, one of these books: the Grey Skin Psalter obtained from the House of Dust and Ash on Solomon (see page 218 of **DISCIPLES OF THE DARK GODS**). Importantly, this is not the only copy of the Pattern; others exist including the one Erasmus took with him when he vanished. One additional copy is in the possession of the Amaranthine Syndicate faction on Mara on the person of the Slaught that goes under the guise of 'Miss Book'. If the GM wishes, the Pattern may be changed to a different object if, for whatever reason, the Grey Skin Psalter cannot be used, or he would prefer to use something else.

ELEMENT 2: THE GUIDE

While the Pattern gives the Acolytes a path to tread to the Blind Tesseract, it is a far from easy and fraught with shifting perils, so that it requires a Guide who can interpret it and steer past the greater dangers on the way. The guides know how to interpret the Pattern through bitter experience: they have previously had Mara's insane nature revealed to them by Haarlock's doing, or they have some manner of unnatural insight into the Warp. If shown the Pattern, the Guide is able to instantly recognise it for what it is and to steer the correct path through the shifting possibilities of the Ice Station with considerable accuracy.

The Damned Navigator

The Guide presented here is the half-mad Navigator Benhamin Nostromo; a damned soul and former servant of Erasmus Haarlock, now cursed to haunt the ice station's environs (see page 36). Nostromo has his own conflicted reasons for aiding the Acolytes, and while he may be trusted, he is only interested in furthering his own goals. If Haarlock returns, he secretly believes he is free to finally die or at least escape; a condition the Acolytes may have encountered before in the Rogue Trader's erstwhile servants. The GM may choose a different NPC to be the Guide based on the circumstances that exist for the Acolytes coming into **DEAD STARS** or simply add them to the roster of available help.

Other potential Guides are the Remains of the Widower from **TATTERED FATES** and the Daemon of the Mirror from **DAMNED CITIES**.

The Blood of the Scion

It is possible, depending on the story elements and adventures played previously, that one of the Acolytes or other NPCs present on Mara may be a member of Haarlock's bloodline, and bound to the strange fates and dark destiny of the Haarlock line. If this is the case, then they are a guide,

whether they know it or not, as the temporal and psychic resonances of Mara and Haarlock's passing sing in their very blood. The deeper the character goes into Mara, the more it feels strangely familiar to them, with a mounting sense of déjà vu and impending dread. The GM should grant them nightmarish dreams (should they sleep) where the blood of thousands is on their hands, and fleeting waking visions no one else can see of a gaunt figure striding half seen ahead of them, the sounds of weeping and dark fearful whispers of the Haarlock name. Nostromo, immediately upon meeting them, recognises them for what they are and seeks to help them, wavering between servility and resentment to the character. While searching for the Tesseract, a gut feeling points them in the right direction.

ELEMENT 3: THE TALISMAN

The Talisman is an object of power needed to activate the arcane engine that Haarlock constructed to activate and control the Blind Tesseract. Of all the elements it is the most vital, for without one, the Blind Tesseract can be reached but it cannot be made to work. A Talisman is a part of the Blind Tesseract's engineering and made from a rare and exotic substance vital to the warp-resonances generated by the Tesseract chamber, which is why it has this effect and binds its use to Haarlock's followers or would be usurpers.

The Keystone

This artefact formed the vital component of the infamous Steel Clock of Gabriel Chase (see page 56 of **TATTERED FATES**). In physical form, it is an irregularly shaped lump of heavy black stone the size of a man's fist. This keystone begins the adventure in the hands of one of the factions present in the ice station, quite possibly the Acolytes themselves.

There are other strange artefacts Haarlock made using this otherworldly substance (see the campaign guide on page 6), including the Black Sun amulet found in the House of Dust and Ash. At the GM's discretion, one of the factions may have a Talisman of their own.

FINDING THE ELEMENTS

The location of the various elements at the beginning of **DEAD STARS** depends on the events of previous adventures and how the GM wishes to set up the challenge of the Ice Station for the Acolytes. The Pattern and the Talisman may both be in the possession of the players at the beginning of **DEAD STARS**, but if they are not, it is best to have each one in the possession of a different rival faction that is also searching for the entrance to the Blind Tesseract.

The Guide, in the form of Benhamin Nostromo, does not begin in the possession of any faction and is there for the Acolytes to claim as they explore the Ice Station. From Nostromo, the Acolytes learn of the existence and importance of the other elements. They will thus either realise the importance of what they have, or learn that they have to take them from their rivals by fair means or foul, hunting them through Mara's icy halls.

ENEMIES AND ALLIES

It is up to the GM to bring out the nature and the actions of the Acolytes' rival factions during the adventure within the Ice Station, as well as to decide what's happening with them 'off camera' as the adventure progresses. Each has their own motivation and methods but a single goal: gain access to the Blind Tesseract and claim the Haarlock Legacy for their own. More on the various factions and their leaders can be found elsewhere in this book (see pages 9-12), but bear the following in mind when working out what they are up to:

THE PILGRIMS OF HAYTE

Arriving considerably before the others and in large numbers, they have taken substantial losses and left corpses and signs of their recent passing all over the lower levels. What remains of them are about a dozen scattered bands that can be encountered in twos and threes across the upper and mid levels. Half berserk and erratic, they are all the more dangerous for their condition, and have already reverted to cannibalism and killing each other when the desire takes them. They can neither be bargained nor reasoned with, and they attack anyone or anything they meet.

The Pilgrims' surviving leader, a false prophet who goes by the name of Ghost Priestkiller (see page 12), is a shattered wreck of his former self, his brain slowly being devoured from within by Psycheneuein larvae. He has made a bloody lair for himself in the mid levels of the ice station (see the Pilgrim's Rest encounter on page 38) where he is encountered unless drawn out by the death of his servants, over which he now has only partial control thanks to his growing madness and weakened state. Ghost is every bit as deranged as his former flock, and is likely to kill on sight anyone he crosses. In a more lucid moment, he may attempt to abduct or possibly even bargain for a psyker from a large and powerful group, in order to perform a sacrifice to his dark gods in the hopes of improving his condition.

THE AMARANTHINE SYNDICATE

There is one (or possibly a handful of) Slaught in the Complex (Miss Book and possibly Master Nonesuch, see page 10), disguised for the moment as human. Descending into the ice station with them are twelve well-armed mercenaries and Aedrik, a loyal Amaranthine ship captain. Having made landfall shortly before the Acolytes, they proceeded directly into the complex and are attempting to move to the lower levels in a methodical manner. They attempt to take prisoners of anyone they encounter, for questioning if possible, and efficiently slaughter anyone that resists or stands in their way. As matters progress the Slaught attempt to overcome obstacles with a mixture of reasoned analysis and force, but lose the willing assistance of their hired help once their true nature is revealed.

The Slaught, being in communication with an orbital sensor drone, are also in possession of the information that *The Spear of Destiny* has driven off or destroyed all the other vessels in orbit and is now sitting in geostationary position above the Ice station as if waiting for something.



HERROD AND THE TYRANTINES

An Inquisitor has teleported directly into the complex during the battle. This risky move has already attracted the attention of the warp-predators and cost Inquisitor Herrod (see page 58) several members of his team to their frenzied attack. Herrod is now operating cautiously, mindful that another serious attack by the warp predators may finish his chances of getting the answers he seeks about Haarlock and the Legacy. He does not seek out armed confrontation with the other factions unless cornered or in an advantageous position.

Herrod sets up a base of operations in the deeper parts of the Utility Complex and sends his agents out to stealthily survey the area and plant observation devices about the complex (although their efficacy is badly affected by the prevailing conditions on Mara). They move on and evade the other groups unless cornered, in which case Herrod unleashes the full might of both himself and his retainers on his opponents without a qualm.

FORGING ALLIANCES

Given the supreme danger that simply being in the ice station represents, the Acolytes and their erstwhile enemies (with the notable exception of the Pilgrims of Hayte) may well be drawn into tentative alliances, particularly once they start getting reduced in numbers by the dangers around them. Such alliances may be arrived at over armed standoffs, communications on hastily repaired vox equipment or the simply expediency of coming to each others aid when Mara

MISPLACED ELEMENTS FROM PREVIOUS ADVENTURES

It may be that through the course of the Haarlock's Legacy Campaign, the Grey Skin Psalter and the Keystone of the Steel Clock have been lost, taken by rivals, handed over to higher authorities or left somewhere else far away from where they are needed. What if, for example, the Psalter was left in the House of Dust and Ash and apparently destroyed? What if the Acolytes recovered the Keystone of the Steel Clock but very properly handed it over to be kept under lock and key by the Inquisition? The answer is simple; their rivals have them.

Anything lost in the House of Dust and Ash may well be in the hands of the Amaranthine Syndicate (the Slaught are very, very hard to kill after all), or any of the other factions encountered during this adventure, who may have plotted and killed to acquire them.

Anything left in the secure vaults of the Tricorn Palace on Scintilla or in Sinophia may have been stolen by the Collegium Tenebrae and is now in Inquisitor Herrod's possession, a factor that can tip the Acolytes from the beginning to inquisitorial involvement.

The Keystone or the Widower Fragment, if taken by the Pilgrim's of Hayte on Quaddis, is now held by one of their diminishing band in the sub-levels of the ice station, or at least waiting to be found on the bodies of their dead.

shows its true face. But bear in mind neither the Tyrantines nor the Syndicate can be trusted, and the closer to the prize, the more likely the double cross becomes.

THE HORRORS OF MARA

Mara itself is a lurking horror, a nightmare waiting to be realized, quite apart from the Haarlock Legacy and outside the control of even Erasmus Haarlock or any that have come to seek him. Mara, bathed in the spectral light of its murderous star, is a place that should not be, with fissures in the fabric of its reality like cankerous worms writhing through a rotting corpse. The Blind Tesseract can be accessed via this tangled web of Warp-incursions, but is not in fact their cause, and beneath the thin skin of Mara's reality a myriad of mindless horrors seethe and hunt remorselessly. When living minds and violent acts grow strong enough in Mara's realspace, they swarm like sharks to bloody water, overcoming the thin barrier between the physical and the beyond with terrifying ease.

Astral Spectres, Unclean Sprits and more, in particular the dread Mara strain of Psycheneuein which were named for this place, lurk unseen and hungry, close under the surface of things, skimming reality as if it were no more than a film of water. For normal minds, there is a near-relentless feeling of being watched, as if something fearful and horrific was waiting around every corner. For psykers, however, Mara is worse. What others might dismiss as phantom fears are for them stark truths; they know that the place teems with unseen horrors just waiting to scent blood and that beyond them are the chill echoes of vast and alien intelligences too terrible to contemplate.

Just when to unleash Mara's hidden nightmare inhabitants is for the GM to decide, depending upon the moment and just what the Acolytes can cope with, although some are included within the encounters that follow. As a guideline, the Warp Entities are drawn to protracted incidents of violence such as lengthy gun battles, fights where blood is shed and anything more deliberate such as torture within the ice station, which provides the impetus needed for them to break through. If a Psyker's powers are involved, this is all the more likely.

THE MARA EFFECT

The weak fabric of reality that pervades Mara has several deleterious effects. Long exposure over days and weeks can drive the strongest mind to the brink of insanity (although the Acolytes are unlikely to remain for anywhere near this long, one way or another). Additionally, it has the following effects in game terms:

- +10 to any result rolled on the Psychic Phenomena table.
- The difficulty of all Psyniscience tests is increased by one stage (note that this has already been included in tests specifically described in this adventure).
- Any Perils of the Warp result that indicates a daemon or spirit is summoned unleashes 1d5 adult Mara Psycheneuein in the area instead.
- All psychic attempts at divination or truth-saying are impossible here, the myriad of possibilities and fractures in reality make defining any one true path impossible here.

WINNING THE RACE

Depending on how quickly the Acolytes find out what they need to do, and then how well they actually do it, should be used by the GM to judge whether they have done well enough to reach the Blind Tesseract first, or whether a rival faction has arrived there ahead of them. This is important because who enters the Blind Tesseract first determines the state of play at the beginning of Part III: The Blind Tesseract. There are three broad options for the GM:

THE ACOLYTES GET THERE FIRST BY A CLEAR MARGIN

If the Acolytes managed to quickly assemble the elements required, and dealt with the threats they have faced decisively, then they can be assumed to have reached the Blind Tesseract well in advance of any of the other factions. These factions may, depending on their losses, be reintroduced at a later stage (see The Hunter or The Hunted on page 45). They have their own elements and discovered the Door into Darkness some time after the Acolytes passed through it.

Another option is that the Acolytes are the only surviving faction to reach the Blind Tesseract, in which case they need not fear being beaten to the finish line or be concerned with pursuit close behind them.

FINDING THE UNSCRIPTED SOLUTION

The solution to the labyrinth of Mara presented here is intended to give the players a clear set of steps towards achieving their ultimate goal of finding their way into the Blind Tesseract via the Door into Darkness. They have to struggle to achieve each of those steps, but ultimately there is a solution to their predicament that they can work towards without the players having to have personal moments of insight. It is, however, possible that the players may reach their own conclusion about the nature of the Ice Station and form a brilliant and original theory of how to solve the labyrinth that has not been catered for on these pages. If they do this, go with it!

For example, a group of Acolytes that have been through many Haarlock's Legacy Adventures may decide that they need to make thirteen turns down passages and then step through the mirrored surface of a frozen wall, or that a scion of the Haarlock line amongst their number can guide them if they listen to the whispers of the dead. If it is a good idea that it would be more fun in the game and for the players than the solution presented here, then make it the true solution.

THE ACOLYTES GET THERE JUST IN

FRONT OF OR BEHIND THEIR ENEMIES

If the Acolytes have spent too much time obtaining the elements and have not dealt with their rivals, but avoided or fled from them, then those rivals are literally one step behind them as they reach the Door into Darkness. Following the Acolytes may even have been the way that their rivals discover the Door into Darkness. Alternatively, the rival faction could be just one step ahead of the Acolytes and meet them head on in the Tesseract.

THE ACOLYTES GET THERE WELL BEHIND THEIR ENEMIES

If the Acolytes have dawdled, not acted decisively to secure the elements, or suffered grave setbacks, then even if they obtain all three elements and reach the Door into Darkness they have done so after at least one of their rivals. This means they arrive at the Tesseract to find Haarlock's engine running and must pursue their enemies as swiftly as they can or lose everything.



ARRIVING AT THE ICE STATION

Having escaped the battle in orbit, the pilot of the guncutter carrying the Acolytes makes an immediate descent to the surface of Mara, aiming for the location of the Ice Station. As the guncutter approaches, it is hit by missile fire (although they won't know this immediately for sure) from within the compound and has to make a crash landing. The Acolytes and their subordinates must then prepare themselves to face the lethal environment of Mara and fight their way into the Ice Station surface compound. From there, their exploration of the secrets and perils of Mara truly begins.

DESCENT THROUGH FIRE

Once the players have had a chance to briefly discuss their situation, read or paraphrase the following:

"Through the armoured glass of the guncutter's small view ports, you can see the sky burning behind you with plasma explosions and vaporizing debris. The fires of the ships' deaths burn so bright that the stars seem swallowed up by the fury of the inferno.

The guncutter begins to shudder as it descends through Mara's Atmosphere. The temperature within is oven hot and all around comets are falling, trailing plumes of greasy flame through the thin skin of air around the ice world.

"Ice station Mara arrival in sixty seconds!" the co-pilot shouts over the comms system, and even as he finishes, you can hear the insistent chimes of targeting alerts.

The pilot does not have enough time to produce an oath before an explosion blows fire and debris through the interior of the guncutter and the outside air howls in, bringing with it an instant shrieking cold. Looking forward helplessly from your crash-frames, you can see that the co-pilot and the cockpit canopy glass have both disappeared in a mist of blood, splinters and bone fragments and the craft begins to spin as if hurled like a discus."

As with the battle in space, you may wish to involve the players by testing for the pilot to control the guncutter's descent, or if any of the Acolytes have a relevant piloting skill, encourage them to struggle to the controls and crash land the ship, rewarding such bravery with XP. Safely crash landing the guncutter without injury to those on board is a **Hard (-20) Pilot (Spacecraft) Skill Test**. The surviving pilot's skill total is 53.

"The pilot is screaming and bleeding. His hands are still on the controls when the guncutter impacts into the icy surface of Mara with a thunderous crack.

The fuselage rolls slowly, shedding debris with every turn, until it suddenly is still and the only noise you can hear is the hiss of vaporised ice and the whistle of an icy wind through the rents in the fuselage."

The condition of survivors depends on whether the Acolytes have been passive or active in the descent and how well it was handled on the way down. Either all the passengers are largely unharmed by the crash, though the pilot and co-pilot are very dead, or if the crash went badly the Acolytes themselves may have sustained minor injuries (1d5 Wounds bypassing armour and TB, avoided with a **Difficult (-10) Toughness or Agility Test**), and 1d5 Janissaries are also dead. (Note that regardless, the guncutter still crash lands largely intact, otherwise this would make for a rather short adventure!)

After the crash, the guncutter itself is a wreck and provides only limited shelter from the killing-cold wind that is now streaming in through its punctured hull.

READYED FOR THE COLD

The Maccabian Janissaries have come prepared for the cold; under their armour they are encased head to foot in a skin tight environmental body glove. They have also brought two additional medipacks (see page 148 in the Armoury Chapter of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook) and two spare sets of Environmental Bodygloves (see page 150 in the Frontier and Void Chapter of the **INQUISITOR'S HANDBOOK**) for any who do not have proper gear for the cold or whose suits become badly damaged.

REACHING THE ICE STATION

The Acolytes' guncutter has crashed only three hundred metres beyond the outer wall of the Ice Station compound. It is night and the sky is dark and clear, with light provided by the stars and the burning wreckage of the battle in the void above.

THE SENTRIES AT THE GATE

The ground between the guncutter and the compound is open, and as they approach close to the walls the Acolytes come under attack by a groups of five Syndicate Mercenaries (see page 66 in Appendix I: NPCs and Antagonists) positioned in the gantry frames of the main wall of the surface compound. One is armed with a rocket propelled grenade launcher with three krak, two flare, and five frag grenades in addition to his standard equipment, while one carries their remaining one shot surface-to-air-rocket tube (which cannot be fired against ground targets).

The mercenaries are under orders to hold their position, and are even now watching to see if any survivors get out of the wreckage of the guncutter and make it within the walls. Their visibility is poor however, and so they have to pass a **Challenging (+0) Awareness Test** to spot the Acolytes and their companions, even if they are not trying to be particularly stealthy.

If the retainers do not spot them as soon as they clear the wreckage and come into line of sight, then they test again for every 100 meters closer the Acolytes approach towards the compound. Once they know where the Acolytes' forces are, they begin firing.

The mercenaries are behind the rockcrete battlements of the wall and are at a (–30) penalty to hit, though the mercenary with the RPG must stand and expose his body to fire it dropping his cover to (+0). Should the Acolyte team include a good sniper, the threat posed by the retainers can be eliminated swiftly. Likewise, the wall is not intact and a stealthy attacker or attackers can outflank them.

INTERROGATING THE RETAINERS

Should any of the retainers be taken alive by the Acolytes, a successful **Difficult (–10) Interrogation or Intimidation Test** will reveal that they are part of a much larger team of hired mercenaries accompanying a group of merchants and traders who have descended into the complex below leaving them and two others to ensure that no one else lands and enters the compound. Passing by more than one degree of success also reveals that they have not had any contact from the two others left to guard the control complex by the landing pad when the main group descended into the ice station about an hour ago. More than two degrees of success reveals the presence of a booby trap device on the syndicate flyer and the truth that only Captain Aedrik and the syndicate 'principals' (i.e., Miss Book and any other Slaughter in the syndicate's team) have the accessor key required to fly the syndicate lander.

An examination of the compound's surroundings reveals a black-hulled armoured lander sitting on one landing platform, a little larger in size than their former guncutter, but clearly rigged for speed rather than combat. It is powered down and sealed. Getting onboard requires a **Difficult (–10) Security or Hard (–20) Tech-Use Test**. Failure triggers an electrocution trap that inflicts 2D10 E damage to whoever is trying to pick the lock (armour and toughness bonuses count as normal). The lander's flight and weapons systems are hardwired to an accessor codekey and cannot otherwise be used. It does however have working life support, food stores and a usable medical bay, and thus makes a viable and relatively safe base of operations should the Acolytes wish.

If the GM intends on having additional rival factions (beyond the Amaranthine Syndicate and Inquisitor Herrod and his retinue), there should also be obvious signs that more than one group has already arrived. Tracks in the snow coming out of the snow wastes, the wreckage of another transport, or fresh corpses of those killed by the Amaranthine Syndicate when they arrived may well be present.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE ICE STATION

Ice Station Mara is a vast complex that extends above and below ground in many kilometres of tunnels, passages, chambers and rooms. Rather than detail the exact layout of the Ice Station room-by-room and passage-by-passage, it is presented here as a series of encounters that can act as a toolkit for the GM to create the Ice Station experience that the players will most enjoy.

The encounters provided for, or created by, the GM should be strung together as needed to create the illusion of a vast and intricate location without requiring an equally vast map and pages of location notes (GMs who have run **TATTERED FATES** will recognise this as a similar technique to that used to create the vast maze of the Red Cages), although a basic layout map has been included to assist the GM in visualising the Ice Station (see pages 71–72). In particular, it has been left up to the GM to flesh out the more 'mundane,' (if no less sinister) series of rooms, gantries, chambers, and corridors between encounters.

Each encounter has been marked as Upper Levels, Mid Levels or Deep Levels as a guide to where each encounter is best used. GMs are advised and encouraged to invent their own encounters and details to further 'fill out the map' and re-position the encounters in accordance with the path the Acolytes choose to take. It can be useful to create a note-map of which encounter has been used, where and in what order (that the Weeping One was used just before the Frozen Slaughter for example) for reference. Most importantly, remember that the Ice Station and mines constantly reconfigure their physical space when no one is looking (woe betide the Acolyte group that splits up too much on Mara!), and discontinuity between physical locations is part of the style of the labyrinth element in this part of **DEAD STARS**. Don't worry if the layout does not make sense to the players. In fact, the GM should make sure that the farther down the Acolytes go into the ice station's dark embrace, the harder it is for them to figure out where they are.

CLASHES AND AMBUSHES

Fighting the other factions that are pursuing the final prize of Haarlock's Legacy is a central part of the Acolytes' experience of the Ice Station. At the very least, Inquisitor Herrod and his agents are hunting for the keys to Haarlock's location in secret, and the xenos-enthralled Amaranthine Syndicate are also loose in the Ice Station, methodically trying to explore it and eliminate the opposition. Besides these there may be others who have managed to reach the Ice Station and are pursuing the clues to the final secret with every weapon they possess (i.e., the Pilgrims of Hayte and any other faction of the GM's choosing).

Given this, and the fact that one or more of the elements to solving the labyrinth (see page 26) may be held by different factions, there is going to be blood and violence

before the Acolytes reach the Door into Darkness and gain entrance to the Blind Tesseract. These battles may be a chance encounter between rival forces that come face to face in a chamber or tunnel, or a planned ambush by one on another. Ambush encounters between factions are also included (see the Hanging Gallery on page 39 for an example), but it is up to the GM to create other interactions as needed; both in response to the player-characters' actions and to what the other factions are doing in particular circumstances and as the adventure progresses.

REST STOPS AND OTHER HUMAN WEAKNESSES

The Acolytes may be on Mara for some time, in which case they must take breaks to eat, rest, re-arm, submit to the call of nature, undergo medical attention, and even sleep—all of which can be as perilous or disturbing as the GM wishes. Sleep in particular on this accursed world is dangerous and filled with ravaging, vivid nightmares, the exact details of which flee the most disciplined of minds within moments of waking but leave a lasting dread and horror staining the soul.

Anyone without some form of the Untouchable trait who sleeps for more than four hours or so (enough to actually rest) must succeed a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** on waking aided by any talent that protects against the effects of fear, or suffer 1 point of Insanity.

THE ENCOUNTERS

The following detail the potential encounters the Acolytes can have within the ice station's environs, depending on where they travel within it, in a rough order of likelihood. Only the encounter with Nostromo and the Door to Darkness are vital. Because these list only 'active' situations, the GM should bear in mind that the vast bulk of the ice station is utterly empty and devoid of life, silent and cold as the proverbial grave, except where he chooses to make it otherwise.

THE EMPTY HOUSE (SURFACE LEVEL ENCOUNTER/LANDING COMPLEX)

Gaining entry to the landing complex buildings is as simple as activating the manual winch control on the outer lock door. Within is a looted and ramshackle mess of damaged corridors and burnt out chambers, lit, perhaps surprisingly, by weak flickering lumen globes. The air, while still cold, is warmer than the outside and there is sluggish movement through the ventilation systems thanks to hasty repairs. There are some signs of recent squalid occupation: At the end of the corridor facing the entry doorway, behind an improvised barricade, is a new and recently cleaned (and loaded) compact auto-carbine lying on its side as if abandoned. Beside it, a half-burned and still smouldering Lho stick rests propped on a ledge. There is no sign whatsoever of the smoker in the building, nor of any other life whatsoever.

WHERE DARKNESS HAS LEASE

As a rule, the initial encounters experienced by the Acolytes should be high on tension and low on actual violence or horror. Show them the slaughtered remains of a syndicate retainer with his brains eaten, have debris move without anyone touching it, have corridors lead back on themselves, have them hear strange noises or see things out of the corner of their eyes and the like. Mara is best thought of as a hyper-violent haunted house, and the full array of murdered spectres, dreadful apparitions, unseen horrors made of darkness, and disembodied ghastly screams are all appropriate to the station's icy corridors. Do not go all out with daemons and warp-animated corpses yet: wait and let the setting build the tension. The Acolytes also have enough mortal enemies wandering the upper halls to contend with in any case. Only once the fires of apprehension and lurking terror have been stoked should Mara be let off the leash, regardless of how dainty or well-behaved the Acolytes have been. Unleash the Psycheneuein or some other warp-spawned horror (a selection of these are presented in Appendix I: NPCs and Antagonists), but be warned; the whole setup from the darkened labyrinthine station to the murderous environment outside is all designed to isolate the players and leave them with nowhere to run!

Detailed investigation and searches of the complex building, using appropriate skills at a Difficult (–10) modifier, reveals the disturbing evidence of half-finished meals, rumpled bedding, abandoned equipment, half-finished repair work and other



signs that someone has tried to make this complex some sort of living area or base on different occasions. All have seemingly vanished in the midst of what ever they were doing, as if snatched into thin air, just as it would seem happened to the two syndicate mercenaries no more than an hour or so ago.

Acolytes with the Forbidden Lore (Inquisition) skill who make a **Challenging (+0) Awareness Test** notice a hidden Ordo Malleus sign left in the burned ash in several of the rooms of the landing complex whose presence indicates a 'static' but unknown danger.

What happens should the Acolytes wish to linger too long here is left to the GM to decide.

THE CHAMBER OF THE DEAD (UPPER LEVEL ENCOUNTER/UTILITY SECTION)

The door to this chamber opens with a squeal of rusted metal that seems shockingly loud in the silence. It is a broad octagonal chamber perhaps ten metres in diameter. Empty packing cases and scattered machine parts litter the floor and all is frosted with ice. There are signs that power and heat were restored at some point after the Ice Station was abandoned. The darkness seems thick, almost solid. There are barricades against the opposite door; a crude conglomeration of crates and wreckage and just beside it, propped up in a seated position, is a body. The corpse looks relatively fresh, or at least well preserved by the cold. The sunken flesh of the face is yellowed like wax, and beneath the thick layer of frost is a poor quality void suit. There is a frozen, crystallised gash of red on the bare right forearm propped up on the barricade, and the glittering of blood that turned into a crimson icicle as it flowed.

There is writing on the wall above the body, a smeared, dark stain that can only be blood as well. It reads, "Make it Go Away, Crawling in my Head."

Further investigation reveals eight more bodies around the room; all have the backs of their heads blown out and in some cases the muzzle of their gun is still between their frozen jaws.

After a few moments in the chamber, characters who fail a **Challenging (+0) Willpower Test** hear the sound of dripping, even though everything in the chamber is quite frozen. At this moment a single member of the Maccabian Janissaries turns to one of his comrades and shoots him at point blank range, killing him instantly. He then turns on all other members of the party, howling uncontrollably. In the following combat a buzzing and noise of insect wings permeates the room until the Janissary is dead.

DYING TO GET OUT (UPPER LEVEL ENCOUNTER/CORRIDOR SPACE)

A partly jammed bulkhead door blocks the Acolytes' path. On the other side is a body; it appears to be an inmate of the former penitentiary. Clad in grey prisoner's coveralls and ink-branded on the cheek with an Arbites mark and prisoner code, the body appears impossibly recent, with no signs of freezing or decay having taken place. The prisoner's face is contorted with fear, but aside from bloody and broken fingernails where

he has been scrabbling to get through the bulkhead door, there is no sign of a cause of death or evidence of violence on the body. A few minutes after its discovery, in a span of mere moments, the body rapidly putrefies and decays, blind white fibrous worms rupturing from its innards. So violent are their struggles, the corpse judders and flops around, and so disturbing is the strange bubbling and hissing sound the rapidly multiplying and swelling worms make that witnessing this event is enough to cause a **Fear (1) Test** in its onlookers.

If the Acolytes fail to burn or otherwise dispose of the worms and the body, the worms swarm off hissing into the dark and rapidly begin to grow.

A BLOODY AFTERMATH (UPPER LEVEL ENCOUNTER/UTILITY SECTION)

This large open chamber, formerly a cargo access loading area for ore and crystals, is now heavily rimed with frost. It was also the site of the ill-fated arrival by teleport of Inquisitor Herrod's party to Mara and the warp-predator attack it triggered. There are considerable signs of recent violent death and gunplay in the chamber—plus two bodies.

Any Psyker entering the chamber should immediately make a **Routine (+20) Psyniscience Test**. Success reveals that the air still echoes with the aftershocks of a very recent breach in the Warp in the space. More than three degrees of success reveals the impression of a predatory psychic stench still permeating the room.

The first body is a decapitated figure laid out on the frosted floor, the red arterial spray from the neck fanning out vividly across the ice-crystal-caked floor. Closer examination reveals bloody Administratum robes of high rank over an environmental body glove, and a signet ring bearing the emblem of the Hetaireia Lexis—a noted university on Scintilla with reputedly radical leanings—easily recognisable to any Adept or other character with scholarly skills. The corpse's webbing belt also reveals numerous notebooks, data-slates (all encrypted) and a laspistol with an overcharge pack and two spare power cells. There is no sign of the dead savant's head.

Decoding even the most basic of the dead man's notebooks is a **Difficult (-10) Logic Test** and takes at least an hour's uninterrupted and patient work. Success reveals some basic details on Mara that correspond very closely to the information the Acolytes already possess. Two degrees of success reveals further that the ciphers are very similar to those used by the Holy Ordos, and three or more degrees of success reveals a notation made in the margin of a page of hastily written symbol code that reads, "Herrod has been assigned, will I live through this?"

The second body is fused with a mangled lump of what appears to have been machinery, the metal framework of which has crumpled and run like candle wax exposed to a blowtorch. There is little to be discovered in what remains of the body; a head with its features seared off, connected to a molten fleshy lump, fused with scorched metal and ceramite shards that might have once been powered armour. A successful **Challenging (+0) Forbidden Lore (Archeotech) Test** or a **Hard (-20) Tech-Use Test** identifies this smouldering mess as the result of a botched teleportation transit.

Use of any Psychic power within this chamber attracts the attention of a Dybuk Render (see page 65), which arrives 1d5 rounds after the power is used. It is immediately drawn to attack the individual who manifested the power. Subsequent power uses do not provoke this response.

THE VOICE ON THE WIRE (UPPER LEVEL ENCOUNTER/CORRIDOR SPACE)

This encounter can be located in any corridor, empty chamber or guard post. Awareness tests can be made at some distance away to hear a soft, repeated sound coming from a damaged vox-terminal mounted on a wall. Alternatively, the noise can start up as the Acolytes pass the terminal itself, in which case, no tests are required to hear it. The voice from the terminal will be a faint, static-shrouded refrain of "Help me" repeated slowly over and over again. No amount of tech-lore will discern the source of the signal, nor can Psyniscience or other psychic means distinguish its cause beyond Mara's own background disturbance. If anyone puts their ear to the sound or states that the voice is a recording, vary it with "Help me {Acolyte's Name}" for a single time. Destroying the vox-terminal is the only way to end the voice.

CROSSFIRE (UPPER LEVEL ENCOUNTER/PRISON CELLS AREA)

The sound of a protracted gun battle can be heard further ahead somewhere in the complex. If the Acolytes wish to advance toward this to find out what's going on, then a succession of **Ordinary (+10) Awareness Tests** are needed to successfully locate the area of the fight in the icy echoing corridors and rooms with speed.

The sounds of the gunfight lead on to a large refectory chamber around ten metres wide by twenty metres long, with numerous entrances and exits and a mezzanine balcony surrounding it. Many of the wire cage sheets that protected the mezzanine level have collapsed to the ground or hang partly away from their mountings, while much of the refectory floor is still covered by bolted down metal tables and benches. These two factors of terrain, when combined with the frosted air and the dim illumination provided by a few failing lumen globes set in the ceiling, make for a perfect murderous playground of confusion and cover for the ongoing exchange of fire.

There should be at least two sides involved: a numerically superior force on the ground and a numerically inferior force holding the higher ground on one side of the mezzanine. The GM should modify these two forces and the area the Acolytes have entered from (which can of course serve to catch them in the crossfire at worse or let them mount an easy ambush as desired) to suit the size of the Acolytes' group. A suggested number for the surviving combatants is to have the larger group's manpower at around half the Acolytes' group size and the small group at about a third (rounding up). There should also be a few recent casualties dotted around for good measure.

Example: The Acolyte group has seven members (including Janissaries), so the opposition could involve four Pilgrims of Hayte (as the larger group) and two Syndicate Mercenaries (the smaller group.)

For added danger, the GM can have the guns fall silent just as the Acolytes near the chamber, as the two sides seek an advantage stealthily in the lull.

For every fatality occurring in the combat there is the chance of psychic phenomena occurring in the room of the GM's choice, up to and including the arrival of Mara's Warp-predators should the violence prove particularly bloody (see the Antagonists and NPCs section on page 58 for some suggestions.)

This encounter serves to give the Acolytes something tangible to fight, and to display the multiple factions present in the ice station. It also illustrates the danger of too much bloodshed attracting the attention of the things that lurk in its environs. Savvy Acolytes can also use this encounter to try and capture some prisoners or even lay the ground work for negotiation or alliance, as well as resupply where needed from the fallen.

THE PANOPTICON (UPPER LEVEL ENCOUNTER)

At the centre of the first sub-level, the Acolytes find a great iron-clad spiral staircase leading down into the inverted tower at the centre of the Panopticon. After many turns, the staircase passes through the roof of a cylindrical chamber the sides of



EXPENDABLE SUBORDINATES

The Maccabian Janissaries have been included in this part of the adventure partly because they allow highly lethal encounters to still be survivable by the Acolytes, and to put them on an approximately equal footing with the other factions. They also allow the GM to indulge in a few (or more than a few) horrific deaths. The Acolytes' subordinates should, in the GM's eyes, be seen as completely expendable, and killing a few, possessing one, or having one go mad is not only permissible, it is what they are there for!

which are lined with niches accessed from the staircase. At the bottom is a circular landing around which are horizontal slits at eye height. From these slits there is a view into an open shaft which seems to surround the circular chamber; the walls of the shaft are lined with hundreds of dark openings. The niches that the Acolytes pass house banks of pict-screens and vox speakers. Before each is a servitor, its eyes and ears linked to the machinery by cables. All are long dead.

As the Acolytes move around the inside of the chamber, have them make occasional **Challenging (+0) Awareness Tests**. If they pass, they think they see one of the dead servitors move slightly, or hear a snatch of voices coming from the vox speakers. After a while, the sound of voices becomes louder and then all the servitors jerk in their niches and every pict-screen jumps to life, showing views of all parts of the Ice Station complex.

This is an opportunity for the GM to show the Acolytes what other factions are present in the complex and what they are doing briefly, as well as any amount of strange phenomena or echoes of events past. After a few minutes the screens begin to cut out and become fogged with static. Finally, they all go blank at the same time as the vox-speakers blare out distorted sounds which last for a second and then fall utterly silent.

At the centre of the Panopticon is a cluster of five armoured metal cage elevator cars, each large enough to carry around twenty men at once. At some point in the past, since the station was abandoned, these have been repaired and spliced to an energy cell supply about a third of which remains unused. The elevators traverse down a great open shaft into the frozen black heart of Mara and the mid levels, and show signs of recent use.

THE MAROONED NAVIGATOR (UPPER LEVEL ENCOUNTER/PRISON CELLS AREA)

This is the pivotal encounter between the Acolytes and the abandoned Navigator of Erasmus Haarlock. It can occur at any point while the Acolytes are exploring the Ice Station but, it is best to introduce it relatively early in their explorations as the information that it gives them is vital for the rest of this part of the adventure. The Acolytes see a half closed door with flickering light coming from around it.

When they enter the room read or paraphrase the following based on their actions:

You push open the heavy door. Beyond is a sizable room crudely furnished with scraps and detritus seemingly scavenged from all over the complex. It is filled with the flickering light of wicks burning in bowls of machine oil and the air is thick with the cloying scent of their smoke. In the centre of the room, there is an improvised stove made from machine parts that is glowing a deep red. Sitting on a stool next to it is a hunched figure swathed in many ragged layers of clothes. As you step forward, a low chuckle comes from the figure and then a low rasping voice:

"I see you have come at last. I knew you would." As he speaks, he turns to you, his finger and thumb looped together to form the shape of an eye which he holds up and looks through as if through an imaginary lens. His flesh is pale and hairless, his eyes are an ivory white and his forehead is wrapped in a grubby band of white silk woven with stars and symbols. "I am Novator Benhamin Nostromo, Navigator to Erasmus Haarlock." He laughs and bids you welcome.

One time Novator of House Nostromo and personal Navigator to Erasmus Haarlock, this ragged and damned man was left behind by his master on Mara when Haarlock went through the Doorway into Darkness. If they react violently to him, Nostromo cowers, and if they injure him, he flees at the first opportunity.

WHO IS NOSTROMO?

Nostromo was Erasmus Haarlock's Navigator and one of his most loyal comrades; he accompanied Haarlock on all of his ventures both great and terrible and knows many of his secrets. He is also the Guide that can lead the Acolytes to the entrance of the Blind Tesseract should they ask.

His talents were used by Haarlock to find the entrance to the Blind Tesseract in the first place, and when Haarlock at last departed, he left Nostromo bound by occult means to the Warp-suffused hell of the Ice Station to aid his eventual return. Nostromo claims that he has survived by building up a sensitivity to Mara's perils and by his understanding of the Warp fractured reality of the ice station and that for him the long decades since Haarlock abandoned him have passed as if they were only a few months. If questioned, he says as much freely, but the full truth is of a darker hue. Nostromo is trapped here, his life force and very being splintered in the folds of time and damned by the Warp. He cannot leave, nor can he truly die, but lives even now an empty and accursed half-life for as long as his master bids it. If questioned about what he is doing here, Nostromo freely admits his master 'abandoned him' here, but says nothing of the curse he lives under, nor of Haarlock's true intent.

He is quite mad, and his disturbance of mind makes him easily distracted. He is given to mutterings and rants that make little sense, alternated with moments of shocking clarity and sly wisdom. He is well disposed to the Acolytes (particularly if offered food) unless they harm him, and shares information with them freely; his attitude is friendly and familiar. If he accompanies the Acolytes (which he does willingly if asked), he talks as if he knows the Acolytes already; using their

names before being told, knowing their habits and tastes, and is puzzled if asked how he knows them. If violence ensues, he disappears seemingly without trace when others' backs are turned, only to re-appear once the worst is over. Note that Nostromo is more than he appears and restraining him for any length of time is all but impossible; see his profile on page 61 for more details.

Vital Information: The Existence of the Three Elements

The key information that the Acolytes must gain from Nostromo is the solution to the Labyrinth and the existence of the elements (see pages 30 and 26, respectively). Use the following points to guide responses to the Acolytes' questions, or if they are not forthcoming with questions, interjections by Nostromo:

- In reference to the changing nature of the Ice Station: *"It is shifting through the many folds of reality. Like the turning of a clock's wheels and gears, it moves and changes with every instant and at every glance; it is a labyrinth of both this world and that which lies beyond."*
- In reference to how to find the entrance to the Blind Tesseract: *"I led the way once for my master, making a path through the turning cogs of possibility and reality. I could do so again but it requires that I have the Elements of Passage to guide me past the worst perils."*
- In reference to what the other elements are: *"To pass to the Door into Darkness that leads to the Blind Tesseract we must bear one of his black talismans, fragments of the dead stars he paid for in the blood of thousands. If you do not, what you seek will be no more than suicide, and there will be no way out again. The shifting path can be found in one of the grey books. Without that, there is nothing but death for you along the way, but with it, at least a chance of life, oh yes, a chance."*

If the Acolytes do not get the hint that if they do not have the other elements, then a rival faction present within the Ice Station might, the GM may want to add in a comment that if they have not brought the elements with them, others seeking the same end might have them in their position.

OTHER INFORMATION

Nostromo knows a lot about Erasmus Haarlock and can reveal much information about his intentions and Legacy if asked (see below), but does not deliberately put it forward. He leaves out the final truth that for Haarlock to return it is necessary for someone to follow in his footsteps and activate the Tesseract. No amount of questioning can pry this last secret out of him.

A summary of what he knows of what Haarlock wanted and is willing to tell is as follows:

- Haarlock lost his wife and daughter in a battle for succession within his family. This event drove him insane and he became obsessed with avenging himself on his surviving family and with finding a way to undo this dreadful event.

- Though insane and impossible, this goal led Haarlock to pursue all manner of forbidden knowledge and he learned by torturing secrets from daemonkind that by passing through the Blind Tesseract he could find what he desired. Haarlock found the entrance to the Blind Tesseract, but why he has not returned, Nostromo does not know.
- The ship in orbit is *The Spear of Destiny*, the dread vessel on which Nostromo once stood as Haarlock's Navigator. A dark fusion of Imperial and xenos technology and occult lore, Nostromo can feel its malevolent presence hanging over Mara, waiting for its master's return.
- There are others come to the complex: Some arrived a few weeks ago with the reek of blood and daemons on them. Nostromo hid from them as they searched, and waited as they slowly fell victim to Mara's greater darkness and tore each other apart in fear and madness. Now only a scattered handful remains. Others came down about the same time as the Acolytes and the battle in orbit, and have since been playing 'murder in the dark' as he calls it. He does not know for certain how many or who they are, save that one group is led by a thing without a soul that he cannot see but as a fearful shadow.
- Mara wakes; the battle in orbit and the coming of so many bright and violent souls has stirred it from its dark dreams. The mind killers begin to gather on the edge of the sight and any that linger here will beg for death before the end.



THE TURNCOAT (MID LEVEL ENCOUNTER/CORRIDOR)

While negotiating a series of machine rooms and access corridors the Acolytes clearly hear a cry for help from down a side corridor. Should they choose to investigate and proceed down the passageway, they come across a partially collapsed area which shows signs of a recent explosion having taken place. Trapped by his legs under a fallen support girder is a man covered in concrete dust and streaked with blood wearing light carapace armour. Buried beside him is the form of another man, not stirring.

The trapped man is Kort Luther, a mercenary and reclaimator who has come here with the Amaranthine Syndicate, and hired for his technical skills (his profile can be found on page 63), although he owed them no love or loyalty beyond the large sum of Thrones they offered him. When the Acolytes approach, he waves his hands in the air saying, *"I mean you no harm, and Throne blind me, although I know it is too much to expect from this hell hole, a little help would be appreciated?"*

Luther has only superficial injuries but cannot move the girder on his own; several other hands and leverage enables this to be done easily.

Luther claims to have parted company with the syndicate by slipping away while the others were distracted breaking into a power room, the deal having soured in his eyes after it became clear that Mara was a death trap. It also became apparent to him that no amount of bloodshed was making "them" leave without what they were after, and that both he and the other mercenaries were all utterly expendable to their masters. What "finished it" for Luther was when he saw one of the "red madmen" (one of the ambushers) strike the mercenaries' leader, *"calls herself Miss Book she does,"* full in the face with a chainripper and, *"She didn't as much as flinch, just punched her hand through his chest and I swear she broke his spine with her fingers. Then after, she held her hand to her face and the wound just mended, but I swear I saw something writhing underneath before it closed. Mercenary and sinner I may be but I'm no warp-dabbler or xenos-lover either, so I made my mind up to flee when I saw the chance."*

If offered or promised aid or assistance, Luther is more than forthcoming with all he knows and offers to swear fealty to the Acolytes or asks to be set free and pointed toward the surface. *"Better to freeze with the open stars in my eyes than die down here trapped with the damned!"*

Luther is a ruthless, somewhat reckless, and completely self-serving rogue. However, he is charming and can provide detailed information on the syndicate presence here (as far as he knows it); their numbers and weapons. He also tells them that the lead Amaranthine (either Miss Book or Master Nonesuch) is carrying a "tattered grey book" she keeps looking at, and that she is making them search methodically for "a glistening black stone the size of a man's fist" and "any strange machinery that looks out of place." They've also encountered half-starved madmen and *"walking cold dead things like that one."* He points to the body next to him. *"Damn thing had me pinned and wouldn't fall down no matter how many times I shot it. Had to throw a Frag behind it and hope for the best!"*

How the Acolytes deal with Luther is up to them. How loyal he remains if they allow him to join them is left to the GM.



THE MID LEVELS

It is on the mid levels of the ice station that the true nature of Mara should begin to become apparent. Rooms and corridors do not seem to connect as they should, maps fail and things seem to shift out of sight. Neither the cold nor the power levels are consistent here, and a room plunged into ice might be found next to one that seems to be operating under full life support without apparent cause or reason, while much is corroded, crumbling and ruined. Doubling back and trying to retrace your steps here simply doesn't work on some occasions, and what was an open passage is now blocked off as if it had never been. Any who pause long enough in silence begin to hear the echoes of screams, muttered words and the droning buzz of insect wings on the edge of their hearing. An overwhelming sense of malice and brooding fear permeates everything.

THE PILGRIM'S REST (MID LEVEL ENCOUNTER/GENERATORIA)

This encounter involves the Acolytes stumbling on where the Pilgrims of Hayte have been lairing in one of the huge capacitor chambers in the ice station's power generation complex. If the Acolytes are planning to put an end to the pilgrim's threat in the ice station, or recover captives or elements of Mara's puzzle from them, this chamber is where such a deed should be done.

The area the cultists chose for their base of operations is a large roughly circular chamber of open space that extends hundreds of metres down into the void of the dark galleries below and ascends another fifty metres into a bell-like copper-plated ceiling. Hung in the centre of this empty space are three enormous tubular power capacitors, each strung with a patchwork of cable connectors, heat sinks and arc vanes. Two of them are blackened and dead, while the final one still thrums quietly with power. The central level of this chamber is spanned by a series of platforms and metal-meshed gantries, which the pilgrims have made theirs.

This inhabited area has been decorated and partly barricaded with a variety of detritus and scavenged materials, and its floor is thick with broken and gnawed bones where the remaining pilgrims have been devouring their own to survive. Skull capped posts, torches, and flayed skins stretched between wire frames are placed at various points around the perimeter of the area and inscribed with foul symbols in a partly successful attempt to keep this area free from Warp predators.

Among the foul wreckage of the Pilgrim's wake, numerous human remains can be found, mostly from the large contingent of cultists that descended to the base weeks ago, as well as any prisoners and equipment that they have taken since. If any of the Elements were in the Pilgrim's possession, they should be found here.

The Bitter Dregs

The amount of opposition they might confront here depends on just how engaged the pilgrims have been in the earlier parts of the adventure, and how many losses the GM determines they have sustained 'off camera.' Likely inhabitants of the area include Ghost Priestkiller and at least four surviving pilgrims. Bound by staked chains within a tangle of mutilated corpses near the rear, is the form of a Dybuk Render which is unleashed should violence occur. Should Priestkiller and the Dybuk be killed, the threat of the pilgrims in the ice station is broken—those few that remain, shorn of their protection, soon fall prey Mara's dangers. (See page 65 of the NPCs and Antagonists section for more details on these opponents.)

THE HANGING GALLERY (MID LEVEL ENCOUNTER/MINE WORKINGS)

This encounter should be used if the Tyrantine Shadow agents have not yet been encountered properly and still survive.

The Acolytes enter a large chamber with a high ceiling from which hang hundreds of heavy duty environmental suits, each suspended by a cable that runs through pulleys to cleats bolted to the walls. There are two entrances to the chamber; the one the Acolytes used to enter and a second one on the opposite side.

Once the Acolytes have been in the chamber for a few seconds, they should make **Very Hard (–30) sight based Awareness Tests**. If they are successful, they make out the



outline of a figure hanging amongst the environment suits and the glint of a blade edge. This is Darkly Hand, assassin Acolyte to Inquisitor Herrod. Whether they spot him or not, he drops down without a sound and lands in a perfectly poised position, swords drawn out to cut off the Acolytes escape. At that point, Inquisitor Herrod and the rest of his retinue arrive out of the other entrance. If the Acolytes spot Hand, they may act on their normal Initiative; if not, they have been surprised (see page 187 of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook).

Herrod immediately demands the Acolytes surrender themselves to his authority as an Inquisitor and hand over any captives, information and materials relating to the Haarlock Legacy without further delay. Should overawing the Acolytes not work, Herrod quickly changes tactics to acknowledge their independence and negotiate in the hopes of learning more. He even makes them an offer to join forces to find and destroy the keys to Haarlock's secret should they trust him. Should this discussion not go well, the Acolytes not be swayed, or violence ensue, neither Herrod or his entourage want to kill the Acolytes. Even if attacked, they fight to disable, disarm and detain them unless sorely pressed—at which point, they fight back with every resource they possess and without mercy.

THE FROZEN SLAUGHTER (MID LEVEL ENCOUNTER/MINE WORKINGS)

Entering a huge vaulted enginarium chamber more than fifty metres across, part artificial and part natural cavern, the Acolytes are greeted by the sight of hulking and wrecked heavy machinery covered in thick layers of ice, lit faintly by gloomy emergency lighting set high in the vaulted ceiling. At the far side is a broad set of cargo elevator platforms leading down. The floor is covered in a solid layer of smooth dark ice which is in fact frozen blood. Lying on and around the machinery are dozens of corpses of men and women in crude environmental protection suits, with mining tools and a few rusted firearms scattered around them. All have been the victims of horrific violence and all are frozen solid, their features obscured by thick rinds of bloody ice. Many of the bodies have been partly devoured. Close examination, by any character with military knowledge, reveals that some form of desperate last stand was fought and lost here.

Shortly after the Acolytes enter the room, any character with the Psyniscience Skill should make an **Ordinary (+10) Psyniscience Test**. If he passes, he feels things stir in the Warp all around and tastes a feeling of predatory hunger.

If the Acolytes cross the chamber, the air rapidly fogs with extreme cold, growing heavy with the stench of blood and ozone. The corpses that fill the room crack and shatter their icy bonds and begin to creak to their feet, their frozen eyes glowing with a blue ghost-light like that of a dying star. The frozen animate corpses are the Cold Dead (see page 66) and there are three plus the number of Acolytes and Janissaries present. They attack and pursue the Acolytes' party without relent until they kill them all or are destroyed. If the Acolytes scatter or otherwise evade the Cold Dead, they walk the ice station's halls looking for fresh life to extinguish in their chill embrace.



THE DEEP LEVELS

Once the Acolytes descend to the deep levels, they no longer tread wholly in the real universe, but stand instead on the precipice of the nightmare realm of the Warp. Any wrong turn sees them lost, body and soul. Entering these levels without a guide is virtual suicide, and even with one the dangers present in the midnight black chambers and twisted angles of the deep levels are likely to be greater than any the Acolytes have ever faced before. The physical nature of the place, on the surface, is of rough-hewn and high-sided tunnels and great, cathedral-like galleries of sheer and unyielding rock. Here and there the rock surfaces are iced over with frozen water vapour and glittering blackly with seams of minerals and crystalline deposits. The hulks of dead and abandoned machinery loom like the fossilised remains of metal beasts over open-abysal shafts wide enough to swallow a guncutter whole. In places, the husks of desiccated and torn bodies hang from rusted gantries. The darkness is a tangible thing, inky and fluid, fathomlessly deep and pressing against any source of light as if trying to overwhelm it.

Should the Acolytes best or escape the Cold Dead, a **Routine (+20) Tech-Use Test** is sufficient to restore power to the cargo lift controls and descend to the deep levels without trouble. Otherwise, they may go down via one of a number of rough steep sloping tunnels made by the passage of crawler-drills back when the mines were in operation, but these make for an arduous and potentially dangerous climb.

THE CLOCKWORK AUGER (DEEP LEVEL ENCOUNTER/MACHINE WORKINGS)

Entering a vast stone cavern, the Acolytes can see an illuminated complex of prefabricated metal cabins set on risers and illuminated by a faint pool of light within an abyssal sea of darkness. The irregularly shaped cavern seems almost impossibly vast to fit into the space beneath the ice station and although the walls and ceiling cannot be seen, an impression of a limitless gulf surrounds them, and a cold, guttury wind blows through it. Ancient, corroded machinery and mining vehicles (long since completely dead) loom blackly in the darkness of the cavern, while the floor cracks beneath the Acolytes' feet with gritty ice.

If the Acolytes are accompanied by Nostromo, he immediately points at the illuminated cabins and gestures excitedly shouting, *"I know that place, I know that place!"* and rushes off in the dark towards them.

The cabins themselves were once an assay and control centre, and any character with knowledge of the Adeptus Mechanicus immediately recognises the signs and symbols used on the building that denote this was once the dwelling place of a tech-adept assigned to the mine workings. Outside, lumen globes set on stanchions sway slowly in the cold wind, and from within, lights still flicker and faint pulses of static can be heard.

Inside is a scene of disorder and chaos; much of the control consoles and machinery within seems to have been repaired and modified, spliced together in strange ways and additional instrumentation and clockwork apparatus obviously not part of the original machinery have been added seemingly haphazardly. The machinery is powered and intermittently ticks over, registering data on its pict-screens, the print-styluses scratching in response. Much of the spare wall space and other surfaces have been covered in a riot of parchment diagrams of strange mechanisms, occult diagrams, data readouts and star charts.

Getting any sense from the tangle of instruments and parchment requires about an hour of study and is a **Hard (-20) Tech-Use Test**. If the character making the test also has either the Forbidden Lore (Warp) or (Archeotech) Skill at +10 or better, or help from another character that does, the test difficulty drops to Challenging (+0). Information gleaned from this can be found on Table 2-1: The Clockwork Auger, with any high result also yielding the information learned from lower results.

This area is also useful, should the GM wish it, as a place to add any further clues that the Acolytes may have missed previously or to reinforce information they have with more corroborative finds. Additionally, equipment such as climbing gear, clip harnesses, multi-tools, sacred machine oil, distilled water flasks, and medi-packs can all be found in storage lockers in the cabins as the GM sees fit.

Watching the Watchers

Should the Acolytes linger past an hour in this place, the clockwork auger registers a spike of power in their immediate vicinity. Shortly after, all the pict-viewers in the cabin flicker and display a grainy static image of a face. It is the face of Calium Samiel, the Acolyte killed in the escape from the *Sigillite's Word*. He appears terrified and mouths frantic shouts and warnings but no sound can be heard. Suddenly a black-gloved hand wraps itself around his face and drags it back into shadow. The screen blackens and a burning pair of white eyes flares into existence in the view and an overwhelming presence of dread fills the room. All who see the eyes must succeed at a **Difficult (-10) Willpower Test** or fall to their knees. An instant later the screens return to normal.

THE WEEPING ONES (DEEP LEVEL ENCOUNTER/DARK GALLERIES)

The Acolytes begin to hear the sound of weeping echo down passages, and no matter which way they turn, it grows louder. Eventually they enter a rough cave-like chamber that has been hewn from the rock. Its walls glitter with veins of metallic ore and crystal as well as what seem to be ancient patches of worked stone. Its floor is strewn with broken fragments of rock. The crying is coming from the far edge of the room where a figure is hunched against the wall. The figure is wrapped in rags and ice crusted furs, and lank and dirty hair falls about its shoulders. The weeping gives way to sobbing and anguished muttering of which the phrases, "the cell opens, the path is walked again...."

TABLE 2-1: THE CLOCKWORK AUGER

Degree of Success	Result
One	The machinery seems to register warp activity in the area, and shows a steadily increasing series of 'spikes' over the last few hours, with several pushing the limits of its scale. The device's ability and sophistication appears far in advance of Imperial technology.
Two-Three	Directional controls, in what appear to be four dimensions, show individual heavy areas of warp activity all around, as well as several areas of calm, and one spiralling 'void' with no activity at all. These areas are not far off in spatial terms, but seem very hard to define exactly where they are. (GM: Note this is the shadow of the Door to Darkness, the entrance of the Blind Tesseract. If the characters are following the pattern themselves, they are struck with a sudden insight of its location and how to get there, and if mentioned to Nostromo, he can do the same)
Four	Some of the data flows and scanning parameters have been set up in regards to very long range co-ordinates in other star systems far beyond Mara. More detail can be revealed with an Ordinary (+10) Navigation (Stellar) Test or a Hard (-20) Intelligence Test , which tentatively identifies these locations as including Solomon, Dusk, Quaddis and others, some appearing to be in the Halo Stars beyond the Calixis Sector (the Koronus Expanse).
Five or more	Sudden insight into the machine reveals that it has no discernible means of obtaining the information it conveys, nor any power source, and is in fact a jumble of connected parts that has no logical right to function or exist. A sudden vision enters the Acolyte's mind of a dark lean figure of terrifying presence forging cogs and gears, quenching them in the blood of still living xenos creatures, and fitting them together in intricate and insane patterns whilst caged daemons scream in outrage. The character must take a Fear (2) Warp Shock Test . Should he remain lucid, the Acolyte gains all the previous information listed on this table and the certain conviction that this device was built and modified by Erasmus Haarlock to chart his course through this place.

round and round...the messengers of the Traveller approach," can be discerned. As the Acolytes approach the figure suddenly turns around and reveals that it has no face, only a deep red and wet void in the hollow skull of its head.

An unnatural scream fills the room, and from the thing's yawning maw, it vomits a mass of thick black vapour that separates and curdles into dark figures that resemble distorted shadows of congealed blood and darkness. The figure in rags is a Dispayre (see page 352 of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook) and the shadow-like figures are a trio of Splinter Shades (see page 66) and an Astral Spectre (see page 350 of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook). The Splinter Shades attack bodily while the Dispayre and Astral Spectre unleash psychic powers against the Acolytes and scream in guttural voices, "*He shall not return!*"

After a round of combat, the Astral Spectre attempts to possess a member of the Acolytes' party (see the Possession rules on page 331 of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook, not forgetting that the -10 to Willpower tests caused by the entity's Daemonic Presence apply to the attempt to resist possession).

THE TIMELESS ENGINES (DEEP LEVEL ENCOUNTER/GENERATORIA)

Moving into a high-vaulted gallery area marked by dozens of great whirling turbines the size of hab units, the air is noticeably warmer, reeks of ozone, and is lit by a dim ghostly amber light. Progressing through this area, the discordant throbbing of the turbines should become increasingly grating and unnerving, and any NPC with the Acolytes who has previously suffered fear or insanity should become increasingly frayed and agitated.

About halfway through, the amber light thickens and sight and sound distorts appallingly as if the Acolytes had been plunged into a sickening hall of mirrors. Each character must take a **Challenging (+0) Awareness Test** to stay on their feet as this effect occurs.

Select one expendable NPC with the Acolytes and have them suddenly cry out and age to death in seconds, their bodies decaying to dust while their screams echo in the air long after their remains are gone to nothingness.

The only way to escape this distortion is to crawl or stagger away to the other side of the chamber. This takes either a **Challenging (+0) Strength or Willpower Tests** over a number of turns to do, with a total of four degrees of success needed (which can be achieved over several turns). Each turn an Acolyte remains in the area of distortion, they suffer 1 Insanity point. (Note that anyone going irrevocably insane because of this simply crumbles to dust.)

Nostromo, if he is with the Acolytes, remains entirely unaffected, but screams and rants loudly through the whole thing and even helps pull the worst affected to safety. It is up to the GM to determine how this area affects any other NPC companions of the Acolytes, but most should make it across safely.

Once the area of time distortion is exited, roll 1d5 for any Acolyte that was already physically injured. On a roll of a '1,' their wounds have re-opened, causing an additional 1 wound to be lost. On a '5,' they have healed as if time has passed, restoring them to full health (this effect may also heal any 'old' or pre-existing injuries, at the GM's discretion).

THE DOOR INTO DARKNESS (FINAL ENCOUNTER/UNIQUE CHAMBER)

Once the Acolytes have the three elements of the Talisman, Guide, and Pattern, and have brought them together, they now know the way to the Doorway into Darkness.

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"Yes here, here the way is here! Thirteen by Thirteen as the clock marks," Nostromo shouts excitedly.

Taking up the grey book, he removes the sash covering his forehead to expose the dark orb of his warp eye, and gazes at the lines of apparent gibberish scrawled across the book's pages, his finger running across passages and his lips muttering rapidly.

Then, not taking his gaze from the book, he begins to walk swiftly. Following him, you pass through doors and down corridors, sometimes entering a room only to back out into a room or corridor entirely different from the one you came from. Sometimes, you pause in a place while Nostromo counts and mutters strange phrases before continuing to lead you through the steps of your strange dance through the broken reality of the Ice Station.

Finally, you pass through a circular arch and find yourself on a metal gantry that spans to a dead end over a wide shaft that ascends out of sight above and plunges into darkness below. Nostromo jerks as if waking suddenly from sleep and motions at the abyss beneath your feet, his gaze fixed determinedly at anything other than the darkness in its depths.

"There is your final door. I cannot and will not go to that place, my master made sure of that, lest I escape my doom." Without a further word, he shambles back to the circular archway leading into the rest of the labyrinth. He turns and tosses the grey-skinned book onto the gantry at your feet.

"The key turns. Be seeing you," he says and raises his circled fingers to his now covered Warp-Eye and fades from sight as if swallowed by the dark."

The only way to pass through the Doorway into Darkness and reach the Blind Tesseract is to jump from the gantry into the waiting abyss; a leap of faith. Once they have passed through, this part of **DEAD STARS** is over and the adventure moves to Part III: The Blind Tesseract.

Who Reached the Blind Tesseract First?

Based on whether the Acolytes or their rivals reached the Door into Darkness first (see Winning the Race on page 30 of this chapter), the GM should vary the circumstances in which the Acolytes reach the Door into Darkness. The above description assumes that the Acolytes have arrived first by a clear margin. If, however, their enemies are right on their heels, they may enter the shaft behind the Acolytes even as they are looking down, and the Acolytes have to jump into the darkness while fighting. Alternatively, if their rivals have reached the Door into Darkness before them, then they may have left a rear guard that the Acolytes must defeat before passing through to the Blind Tesseract.

THE UNFORTUNATE FATE OF ASTROPATH SILINUS

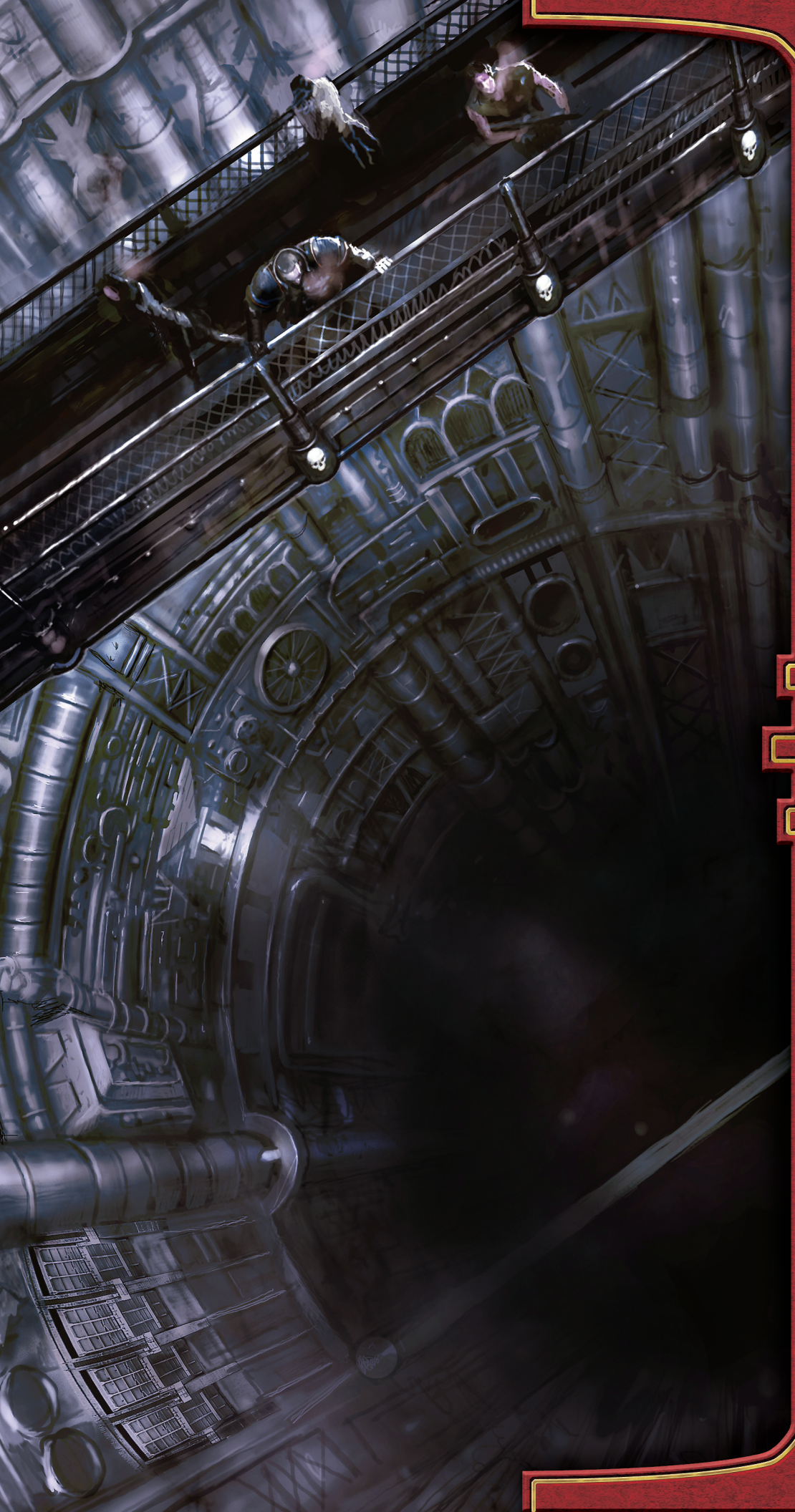
Astropath Silinus does not respond well to being on Mara. From the moment she sets foot on the planet, Silinus looks ill, her normally straight back hunched, her empty eye sockets gently weeping blood. When she is within the Ice Station and mine complex, she is utterly terrified and keeps talking about "the buzzing" and "the voices".

After a violent encounter of the GM's choice, she is found in a corner, curled into a ball, weeping blood. If questioned she says, "A moment of weakness, I tried to manifest my powers and this place...this Emperor-cursed place denied me..."

Unknown to the rest of the party she has been attacked by a Mara Strain Psycheneuein which has laid its eggs inside her: she has become one of The Infested as per page 353 of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook. While she appears to recover her nerve, she speaks little and listlessly follows the rest of the Acolytes. She does not show fear from this point, though she often seems confused and suffers from short term lapses of memory.

From the moment of her infestation, she is a walking time bomb. Her death or ill advised use of psychic powers should be used by the GM to unleash Mara Strain Psycheneuein on the Acolytes (they are on Mara after all). When this eventually happens, she staggers to her feet and laughs uncontrollably before reaching her fingers into her empty eye sockets and pulling off her face and upper head with a wet, splintering crack. Within the bloody mess inside, the Psycheneuein are staring out.





THE BLIND TESSERACT

ENTERING THE
TESSERACT

•

THE CHAMBER OF THE
MACHINE

•

ONE DOOR CLOSES AND
ANOTHER OPENS

•

CREATING ADDITIONAL
ENCOUNTERS

•

THE SHADES OF HISTORY

•

ECHOES OF THE FUTURE

•

ENCOUNTERS IN THE
BLIND TESSERACT

PART III: THE BLIND TESSERACT

"It is only by mankind's narrowness of vision, by the beauty of our ignorance and the purity of our faith that we endure."

—Goge Vandire, Sermons Vol. CXVI

This penultimate chapter of **DEAD STARS** represents the Acolytes' final trial and shows the possible consequences of their actions and role in the Haarlock Legacy. In the Blind Tesseract, they are confronted by Haarlock's machine, a device next to which others they may have previously encountered elsewhere have been mere prototypes of this final great work. The device itself embodies one of Haarlock's many victims, the Iron Daughter, bound to serve his will, and is able to answer many of their questions and provide a means to reach their goal. In order to meet this final hurdle, the Acolytes must face a final trial by fire, a walk in Haarlock's footsteps through twisted reflections of the past and fearful futures that may never be. At the end, should they survive,

they arrive at Haarlock's final point of departure (and soon to be the place of his return), with a final decision to make: to allow Haarlock to return—or thwart him and leave him exiled in the beyond.

ENTERING THE TESSERACT

The Acolytes enter the Blind Tesseract having jumped into the abyss of the Door into Darkness. At this point read or paraphrase the following:

"You are swallowed by darkness and silence, you have no sensation of falling and time seems to elude perception so that it could have been seconds or years since you last saw light, heard sound or touched solid matter.

Then, an image rises before your eyes, as if slowly coming into focus through clouded and darkened glass: A wide chamber of greenish stone, its walls soaring upward to a dark sky in which you can see bright stars, the livid bruises of nebulae and drifts of glittering stellar dust. In the centre of the room sits a great globe-like machine of tangled metal, dials, an insane profusion of looping tracks with cogged teeth, countless gears, and wheels and a glittering array of crystal lenses.

Suddenly the image of the chamber is no longer drawing nearer; it surrounds you. You can hear the crackling and spitting of energy and the air is sharp with the smell of ozone."



What happens after the Acolytes are within the chamber depends on whether they have arrived before, after or at the same time as one of the other factions pursuing the Legacy (if indeed any still survive).

THE HUNTER OR THE HUNTED

All the factions wish to beat their rivals to what they believe is the final resting place of Haarlock's Legacy. Depending on whether the Acolytes arrive before, after or at the same time as the other factions determines who is chasing who through the many doors of the Blind Tesseract. It should be clear whether the Acolytes have gotten to the Blind Tesseract ahead of their rivals or not (see *Winning the Race* on page 30).

If the Acolytes are in the lead at this point, then the chamber is unoccupied and they have time to examine its features thoroughly before passing through a door into the manifold possibilities of the Blind Tesseract. Their rivals only begin to catch up with them some time after they are already moving towards the final goal.

If the Acolytes arrive with their rivals snapping at their heels, they have little time to explore the chamber and have to do battle as they open a door. In this circumstance, their rivals constantly threaten to overtake them. If the Acolytes are just behind their rivals, then the situation is the same but the positions reversed, and perhaps the machine is already active.

If the Acolytes are well behind their rivals, they find the chamber occupied by a rear guard of forces left to prevent them following through one of the doors. They also have to work hard to catch up with the rivals who already have a head start.

THE CHAMBER OF THE MACHINE

The chamber is a thirteen-sided space, some twenty meters in diameter. Its walls are made of a greenish stone; each contains a high arched blank curved space of solid stone, surrounded by myriad of graven images, human and inhuman, with an endless variation of expressions: screaming, smiling, eyeless, mouthless, sneering, crying, laughing and snarling.

At the centre of this area is a huge globe-like machine of insane intricacy, a lunatic conglomeration fashioned of clockwork steel and silver, stone counterweights and crystal lenses. Mounted on a plinth at the foot of the machine is an iron-grey statue of a young woman's torso, arms and head, streaked with rust like bloody wounds. The statue's hands are held out at its sides, one is open as if waiting to receive something, the other holds an empty gilded chalice engraved with the symbol of a spider. The face is veiled; the sculpture is so exquisite that the folds of the veil hiding her face seem as if they have just settled.

Player-characters who have taken part in either *The House of Dust and Ash* or *TATTERED FATES* recognise much of this device's construction as being similar both to the Steel Clock of Gabriel Chase and the Gilded Widow of Solomon.

The high sides of the chamber arc upwards and open on to a cold night sky. Any character with the Navigation (Stellar), or Scholastic Lore (Astromancy) can make an **Ordinary (+10) Test** to conclude from the visible stars that the Acolytes' current location is not within the Calixis Sector.

NO WAY IN, NO WAY OUT

The Acolytes are now within the Blind Tesseract, outside of normal time and space. Other than the machine, there is no way in or out. The sky above them is unreachable, and aside from the action of powerful dark arts or ancient malignant science, neither of which are likely to be at the Acolytes' disposal, the operation of the machine is the Acolytes' only way out, just as Haarlock intended.

THE IRON DAUGHTER

To activate the Iron Daughter, the entity bound within the statue, one of two things must first be done. Either a Talisman (such as the Keystone) must be placed in the statue's empty hand or a quantity of the blood of the Haarlock line must be spilled into the chalice. If this is done, the machine rises up and expands, baleful lights playing across its surface, continuously rotating and reconfiguring, seeming to expand constantly without ever actually reaching the confining walls of the chamber. The statue becomes animate, radiating an aura of intense cold, the metal veil suddenly fluid and the lips moving softly beneath as it speaks.

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"The statue rises up as the machine whirls above its head, crackling energy beginning to play across its surface.

"Welcome." The statue speaks, "I am the daughter of iron, bound here by my master's wrath to look with blind eyes into that which was and that which shall be."

"You have turned the key and opened the gate, and lo, he comes. You have sought what he has sought, walked his path and done his bidding know it or not. Ask and be answered, pursue the future or wait for doom, it is yours to decide. It begins."

A pulse like sheet lighting flares from the machine and the blank stone alcoves flicker like mirrors. While twelve fade, one mirror remains, its surface pulsing like silver water only to fade and be replaced by another shining light in another doorway while a great echoing ticking sound begins to emanate from the machine."

The machine cannot be harmed or interfered with as it exists partially out of phase with reality. There is no force the Acolytes or the others involved can bring to bear to destroy it before its course is run.

If the Acolytes choose to question the Iron Daughter, she coldly answers in truth, but volunteers nothing; the Acolytes must say the words. This entity knows all of the information about the Legacy presented in this adventure's introduction including Haarlock's last secrets and the lore of the Blind Tesseract (see pages 6-8).

III: THE BLIND TESSERACT

Additionally the following facts are within her realm of knowledge, which the GM can paraphrase as appropriate:

Q: What are you?

A: *"I am the dead. Once I was Epiphany Belasco, stepchild to Morgan Haarlock, orphaned and slain, a damned soul among many slaved to Erasmus Haarlock's will. Now I am the voice of mute metal, the blinded eyes of the clock face."*

Q: What is this place?

A: *"This is the Blind Tesseract, a place where past and future collide and cut each other bloody with cause and causality, a rip in the fabric of reality, a wound in the flesh of the Warp."*

Q: What is this Machine/What does it do?

A: *"This is Haarlock's great engine, his triumph and his folly. This is his legacy. With this, he defied gods and sought to master time itself, only to be betrayed by existence itself. By it he was victorious, and by it he was defeated, by its portals he passed and by them he shall return."*

Q: What are these strange portals and what lies beyond them?

A: *"They are doors to futures unborn, to histories strangled and paths unwalked. To pass through them is to become a shadow within shadows; it is to follow in his wake."*

Q: Where has Haarlock gone?/What did Haarlock do here?

A: *"He walked the past to change what was, but found only ghosts and twisted reflections. He walked the future and saw the threads of destiny dark and silent, and from there he passed beyond the sight of my blind eyes into the dead star."*



GHOSTS WALKING THE CORRIDORS OF TIME

Once through the mirror doors, the player-characters experience realities both familiar and shockingly strange, and while what they experience is completely real (they can for example be hurt and die, except in the echoes of actual history with which they cannot interact), they are outside of time and dangerously so. They appear strangely dim and faded even to their own eyes, cast only a hazy reflection and leave only a blurred image in any device or scanner that registers their presence. They do not feel hunger or fatigue nor do extremes of heat or cold bother them. For whatever reason, if an Acolyte might become utterly lost or left behind as others move on, they are doomed and eventually fade, becoming one more lost soul screaming in the Warp.

Q: Will he Return?

A: *"Such was his will. His legacy was to lure others to follow his path, to tread where he trod, to kill and claim dominion, to turn the key and wind the clock so that he might be free. So you have done, so it will be."*

Q: What happens now?

A: *"The gears turn, the doors open, the configuration is set; soon the dead star rises over the place of his last mortal footfall, and in the light of that black eclipse he will walk again with earthly flesh."*



Q: How can we stop it?

A: *The future is not set, even by one such as he. Go where only he dared go, learn what only he dared learn. Tarry not, for to tarry is to be lost. Walk his path from mirrored door to mirrored door, then, at the end of his road, break the pattern, slam shut the door.*

The Acolytes are free to discourse with the Iron Daughter as long as they like, but quite literally behind her the clock is ticking, counting down to the end. Their options are simple, wait for certain death or take a step beyond.

THE MIRROR-DOORS

Examination of the mirrored surfaces in the alcoves reveals a scene beneath each one like a pict-screen image, rippling in the light. Beyond each door, the scene is different and changes each time it flickers in and out of existence. Perceptive Acolytes may divine that they contain images of past and future, unknown vistas and strange and terrifying sites with suitable Characteristic or Skill Tests. Once the players pass through, they discover one of the encounters detailed below or one of the GM's own devising, and then another and another until the end of their journey on Dusk.

ONE DOOR CLOSES AND ANOTHER OPENS...

Once the Acolytes have gone through a mirror-door, they pass through a string of encounters representing the path of Erasmus Haarlock's quest to alter time and the effects of the Haarlock Legacy itself. The order of these encounters is not set and can occur in any order the GM wishes. There can also be as many or as few in number as the GM feels appropriate, although a minimum of the three presented further on in this section is recommended.

After the Acolytes have entered into an encounter, the mirror-door closes behind them. Next, they experience a set of events, make choices and perform actions, and then pass on to the next encounter, signalled in turn by the opening of another mirror-door somewhere nearby.

Each encounter can be seen as a puzzle, one that the Acolytes must solve as quickly as they can. Some are puzzles which require getting a particular response from an NPC; others are solvable by might of arms or surviving long enough to reach the other side. Success is signified in each case by another mirror door opening before them.

If other factions have reached the Blind Tesseract, they are passing through a similar string of challenges. Depending on whether they are in front of or behind the Acolytes, and how quickly they move from door to door with the Blind Tesseract, determines whether they catch or are caught by their enemies. Of course the bizarre nature of the paths through the Blind Tesseract means that their rivals might be going in the opposite direction through an encounter.

Once the GM determines the Acolytes have learned all they shall, and the paths of the past and future have been run, a last mirror door offers them passage to a final configuration, leading them to Dusk as the Tyrant Star rises, and to Part IV: The Last Eclipse.

The Traveller's Shadow

One linking thread the GM can use between these encounters in different spaces and times is a shadowy half seen figure, dark coated and lean, advancing in the distance before them, leading them on; Haarlock's shadow. As long as the Acolytes dog this shadow's footsteps, although they can never catch up to the figure (it is after all only an after-image trapped in time), they will not go far wrong.

CREATING ADDITIONAL ENCOUNTERS

The GM should create additional encounters for the Acolytes to experience within the Blind Tesseract. While a number of events have been presented here to show the possibilities that this part of **DEAD STARS** presents, and to inject a few that are important for the conclusion of the Haarlock's Legacy Campaign, these are by no means exhaustive or exclusive. Given the nature of the Blind Tesseract, almost anything can happen within it, and any path can be explored. If the GM wishes to include something that there would be no other opportunity to, this is the opportunity to do so. Secrets may be revealed and new mysteries and plot threads set up for later use.

When creating an encounter for inclusion in the Blind Tesseract there are a few things that are worth bearing in mind:

- Each Encounter is linked to Haarlock: It was Erasmus Haarlock that built the machine and his desires that worked their will on it. All that passes beyond the mirror-doors is an echo of what he searched for or what he would become, including the different intersecting lives of those who would become involved in his Legacy and plot to return, including the Acolytes.
- Each Encounter needs a solution or a revelation: The encounter should: have a way for the Acolytes to progress to the next encounter; require some effort on their part; and provide something that can be solved quickly or slowly depending on the Acolytes' actions. For some encounters it is enough for them to witness an event of significance or merely survive!
- Different Encounters should require different qualities to solve: Encounters should involve the use of various types of interaction, from combat in some cases, to personal interaction in others so that all the Acolytes have an opportunity to shine.

While the range of possible encounters within the Blind Tesseract can stretch to almost anything, the GM may find it helpful to consider the possibilities offered by the past, present and future.

THE SHADES OF HISTORY

The Blind Tesseract can show the shades of what has been: flickering images and experiences from across the sector and beyond, all swept up in the vortex of Erasmus Haarlock's designs and desires, all steps along the road to the present. Of all the places that the Tesseract may take the Acolytes, it is only this true path in which they are helpless and unseen bystanders to what was. In this, they can witness the source of Haarlock's seething rage: that even after all he had sacrificed and accomplished and the price he had paid, he could not change the past.

The strongest 'echo' the acolytes may encounter is detailed as an example; the pivotal moment in Haarlock's life; the death of his wife and daughter (see Domino Effect on page 49.)

Should the GM wish, the Acolytes may also find themselves as first hand witnesses to momentous events of the past such as a climatic battle, the launching of the Angevin Crusade from Sinophia or the founding of one of his great demesnes in centuries past; all things in which the Haarlock bloodline played a part. They could even find themselves privy to moments from the secret history of their rival factions.



HAARLOCK'S FOOTFALL

The point of the Acolytes experiencing different possible futures is to show them what may come to pass if Haarlock returns or if he does not return. It is vital that this theme is inserted into encounters and that it is clear to the players. The consequences of Haarlock's return should be ambiguous rather than obvious. It might be that Haarlock returning will have terrible consequences, but it might be that the consequences of him not returning are worse. If Haarlock returns for example, he unlocks terrible weapons, the secrets of which he has hoarded for just such a moment—worlds will die and billions burn. If he does not return, the Inquisition, with no single overwhelming threat to unify them, might in their disunity cause the Calixis Sector to be plunged into anarchy and be consumed by an apocalyptic war. In showing the Acolytes these ambiguous consequences of Haarlock's return (or lack thereof), they are forced to make the choice of whether to let him return or stop him with some foreknowledge of what the consequences their decision may be.

Illustrated later in this section are two such potential futures: one that sees the sector capitol of Scintilla in desolate ruins and another in a dark time where even the stars are being swallowed. Which may be true and which is the outcome of their own success or failure here is not easily apparent (see The Blasted City on page 50 and Shadow Play on page 51).

TWISTED REFLECTIONS

It is not only true history the Acolytes can encounter in the Tesseract, but twisted and dangerous fragments of what could have been; half finished distortions of reality that are among the most immediately dangerous and nightmarish things they may encounter.

As the Acolytes pass through the Blind Tesseract, they may step into circumstances that they have already experienced once except that now, in the Tesseract, things are following a different line of possibility and are somewhat different than the way things were, often in nightmarish and twisted ways. In essence, this type of encounter can be created by taking a particularly memorable or enjoyable event from previously in the campaign, or some fight or endeavour that the player-characters got away with by the skin of their teeth and make them re-live it again with a macabre and horrific twist, with the world around them seeming half-finished or vague and familiar faces suddenly distorted and loathsome. Of all the pathways they might follow, these are the most obviously 'wrong' and should be the briefest in terms of time and area, mere splinters of reality rather than full-blown versions of the past or future.

For example, the Acolytes might find themselves once again in the Slaughter Pit of the Red Cages (see pages 16 to 20 of **TATTERED FATES** for more details), except that this time it is slowly filling with blood and Heron Mask is laughing at them from the pit's lip. They may find themselves once again facing the Daemon in the Mirror (see page 23 in **DAMNED CITIES**), but this time they are trapped within the mirror with spectral creatures while the Daemon looks at them from outside the mirror, or confronting distorted and malformed versions of themselves crawling from the shuttle wreck on the surface of

Mara. Such murderous 'doppelgangers' of things past should not be as strong or swift as the 'real thing' so to speak (reduce the Wounds, Strength Bonuses, and Agility Bonuses on their profiles by around a third). However, they should still be dangerous, with the worlds around them slowly unmaking themselves as they die, revealing a way out.

ECHOES OF THE FUTURE

In passing through the Blind Tesseract, the Acolytes experience the future as it might be. These encounters are not prophecies, or guarantees of what will come to pass. Instead, they are possibilities; paths that events might take down the ever branching roads of time. One of the best ways to begin creating these types of encounters is to ask the question 'what if?' and then consider how to show the results of the answer in a single encounter. For example, what if the Pilgrims of Hayte gained control of Haarlock's secrets and using them opened a Warp Rift on Sepheris Secundus? It would be overrun by daemons of the warp in an orgy of horror, bloodshed and sorcery. This could be shown by an encounter in the last bastion manned by a few desperate survivors, surrounded by rank upon rank of daemons massing for a final assault.

EXAMPLE ENCOUNTERS IN THE BLIND TESSERACT

The following are three detailed examples of encounters that the Acolytes may have while passing through the mirror-doors of the Blind Tesseract.

ENCOUNTER: DOMINO EFFECT (THE PAST)

In this encounter, the Acolytes bear witness to the single event that has caused all they have endured and created an obsession that has spanned centuries and cost uncounted lives: the death of Erasmus Haarlock's wife and daughter.

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"The mirror door opens on to a wide domed corridor, decorated opulently in polished white marble and hung with drapes of deep blue velvet. Along one side of the corridor are a series of wide crystal-glass windows overlooking the void of space. Hung majestically against the black, illuminated in the turbulent light of a boiling white star, is a mighty fleet of vessels at gravity anchor, many Imperial in design others strange and unique to the eye. At the centre of this fleet is a mighty Battleship, decked out in ivory and brass, dwarfing all the other vessels around it, its armoured prow mounted with the heraldic arms of a great golden spider.

Without warning the livid tracery of weapons fire and explosions bloom in the void as allies become treacherous enemies and the ships try to get underway and scatter before sudden onslaught from their neighbours."

Although the Acolytes may not realise it, they are now aboard *The Spear of Destiny* as it was more than a century ago, mere seconds before the moment of Haarlock's greatest tragedy and the cause of so much death and suffering since; the moment when his wife and daughter are taken from him.

Alarm claxons sound and a door behind them opens. Rushing through it, and indeed through them as if they were not there, comes a stern-looking but beautiful young woman in a bustled dove-grey gown and a high collar of black filigree lace, leading by the hand a raven-haired young girl in her early teens dressed in white, clearly her daughter by the resemblance in their faces. Beside them whirs a silver-plated servo skull which suddenly crashes to the ground and is still, cutting off their conversation and stopping them in their tracks as brass shutters roll down over the crystal windows and cut off the view of the fiery battle outside.

At this time, the Acolytes should discover that they are in this place as insubstantial shadows, and can neither be seen nor heard. Nor can they affect what is about to happen in any way, and in this are as cursed and powerless to change what has happened as Haarlock was.

In short order, the air at the far end of the corridor ripples and a featureless female form, glistening like oil on water appears, moving forward like lighting, a shimmering grey blade in her hand. Lady Haarlock stands her ground, shielding her daughter and dies in futile bravery, crimson blossoming across her dress. The girl turns and runs, making it perhaps as far as the helpless Acolytes before the assassin claims her life mid-step.



The assassin fades again from view and from nowhere there is an immense howl of rage, more felt than heard; its passing is enough to dim the light and steal the breath from the Acolytes' lungs. A mirror-door appears in front of them as time seems to speed up. The shapes of naval armsmen and servitors flow around them, moving at blurring speed, as a lean and indistinct figure in a long flowing cloak moves with glacial slowness between them, its shoulders slumped as it cradles the girl's body in its arms and staggers towards the mirror-door unseeing.

"I deny this, I deny this, I deny this." The whispered words seem to hang in the thinning air.

ENCOUNTER: THE BLASTED CITY (ALTERNATE FUTURE)

In this encounter the Acolytes are confronted with an uncertain and deadly future for the Calixis Sector in the desolate ruins of a once great city.

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"As you pass through the flickering cold light of the mirror-door you are greeted immediately by warm and cloying air, reeking of burnt plastek and a greasy unpleasantness like overcooked fat.

All around you, and for as far as the eye can see, are the broken ruins and tangled wreckage of a once mighty hive city. The skeletal remains of soaring spires and lofty buttresses jutting like blackened carcass bones, their bases clogged with mountains of rubble and fallen masonry. A soft fall of grey snow is settling, blanketing everything from a turbulent, storm laden sky. As it falls and powders on your clothes, you realise it is not snow at all, but cinder ash.

An immense dark shape appears through the boiling clouds and the blasted city around you vibrates to a deep discordant drone, breaking what you now realise was an utter, deathly silence. The cyclopean shape in the sky resolves to a obsidian-like disk, slowly revolving and flickering with a baleful crimson glow at its centre; a vessel of some kind perhaps more than kilometre across and utterly alien.

As the dark vessel passes through the sky it is joined by another and another, and their progress casts a pall of deeper darkness over the dead city."

Although the Acolytes should not immediately realise it, they are standing in the shattered ruins of Hive Sibellus on the sector capital world of Scintilla. They have arrived in a particularly dark time yet to come and are in grave danger.

In this future, the Calixis sector has slid into anarchy and ceaseless war, ripped apart by division within and civil conflict that allowed far more terrible enemies from beyond Imperial space to have their way. Scintilla is a dying world and the carrion crows have come to feed. The black disks the Acolytes have seen in the skies are Slaught Intruders and even now, their harvester constructs are patrolling the blasted ruins looking for the last morsels to gather up for their masters' table. The Acolytes are quite real here and may affect their environment just as it may affect them.

Exploring the Ruins

As the mirror door closes behind them, the Acolytes have little choice but to explore this post-apocalyptic landscape, which the GM should endeavour to convey as a blasted waste; once grand and terrible, now utterly desolate and lonely. As the Acolytes journey across it, the GM should reveal details of what's going on slowly, first confirming that this is indeed a former Imperial city with fallen statuary, broken Aquilas and so on (perhaps led on by a glimpse of a shadowy, hurrying figure in the distance). It appears to have been destroyed by bombardment and firestorm, but not so long ago, as attested to by still smouldering fires. Its layout may seem strangely familiar to the Acolytes and circumstantial evidence or indeed the intuition of one or more of the Acolytes may reveal this to be Hive Sibellus. One other factor that is also apparent in the waste-scape is a relative absence of bodies. That is until mass graves are found in blast craters filled with great piles of what appear to be scorched and gnawed-on skeletal remains, all missing heads. Nearby on some available flat surface, a spiralling, vortex-like symbol has been burned as if by acid.

The Eaters of the Dead

The Acolytes are not alone in the dead city. Silently patrolling the ruins, looking for a final crop of survivors, are a number of Slaught Harvester constructs (see pages 66-67), nightmarish living machines with no thought but to hunt and kill. It is up to the GM to determine how (and indeed if) they are encountered directly, and it may be that the Acolytes might come across their handiwork or even one or more of these creatures pursuing some hardy but doubtless now insane quarry first.

If Miss Book or some other Slaught from Mara has by some means found her way to the Tesseract before or after the Acolytes, then they are doubly dangerous in this dark future, able to call the harvesters to do their bidding and obey them. A direct assault on the Acolytes here amid the rubble of the city is very likely, with the Slaught in question happy to glory that, *"Our time has come here, and we feast on the carcass of your worlds!"*

The Signal

Once the Acolytes have been making their way on foot for a while, they pick up an encrypted signal on an Inquisition frequency, very faint but definite. This signal leads them inexorably to what they recognise with shock as the blasted ruins of the Tricorn Palace, the headquarters of the Calixian Inquisition on Scintilla. The signal leads them to the overturned wreckage of a Rhino APC in the rubble of the palace and a decayed and partly burned body which appears to have died by its own hand. Pick one of the Acolytes; this is their body.

The realisation of the body's identity, which can be gleaned from personal effects that include a full Inquisitorial Rosette, should have the effect of a **Fear (1) Test** on the individual whose future corpse this is. Grasped in the corpse's hand is a black containment cylinder fitted with purity seals and intricate locks and wards of the most powerful kind and a

golden spider clasp. A personal recording can be accessed on an encrypted data-slate, accesses naturally enough with the dead individual's personal cipher or voice print. The data is badly degraded but some sense can be gleaned from it.

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"I leave this recording, my last testament to whomever may find it amongst my peers in the Holy Ordos... the guilt was ours, the sins were ours... hubris... came to dust... We grew arrogant, grew complacent, after we stopped Haarlock on Mara, after the... Hayte were purged at last... Gallowglass we believed ourselves invulnerable... civil war... Tyrantine Caba... within... Haarlock, it all came back to the legacy, we were so blind... never realised just what he... dead now, all dead... city burning... I... from the deep vault.. but its too late... my legs are shattered I cannot get out... all that remains is to pass judgement on myself... cannot let the worms have my mind..."

Just after the recording finishes a loud drone fills the air as one of the huge black-disk vessels begins to draw down from the skies and a mirror door opens in a ruined arch of the Tricorn Palace wreckage.

Should they take the cylinder, it contains a fine red crystalline dust.

ENCOUNTER: SHADOW PLAY (ALTERNATE FUTURE)

In this encounter, the Acolytes confront another possible future, see the potential consequences of their failure to stop Haarlock, meet an old ally and discover everything they have been told is not as it seems.

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"The shimmering mirror-door opens and you find yourselves in a broad street, lined with cracking plaster-faced walls and gambrel roofs tiled in deep reds. Twilight is falling swiftly, the air is heavy with the scent of a salt sea, and up and down the street you can hear the echoing sounds of doors being bolted and shutters banged closed. The streets are empty and for all the seeming normality of the scene a heavy weight of palpable dread seems to fill the air."

Any player-character Acolyte having previously played **DAMNED CITIES** should almost immediately recognise where they are; the city of Sinophia Magna on the border world of Sinophia, in the edge of the Commerica district (see page 13 of **DAMNED CITIES**.) Those who have not played this adventure can still work this out by rusted metal signs over closely shut and secured buildings belonging to off-world trading cartels and the like. Most alarmingly, particularly for those that have been here before, the city streets are deserted. Where once there was nightlife and bustle amid the decay, there is nothing; they encounter no-one as they walk, every

house either stands vacant and abandoned, is boarded up and sealed, or is locked down as tight as a fortress and opens its doors to no authority or plea.

Should the Acolytes barge or break their way into a dwelling, they find only a handful of paranoid, half-starved souls driven to the brink of madness in terror. These maddened souls mistake the Acolytes for the "servants of the great masters" and attempt to endear themselves by general grovelling, pleading for their lives, offering up their weakest members as "tribute," spitting on the Aquila and other such abasements. They convey little or no useful information other than to confirm that this is Sinophia Magna and it is seventeen years after the date the Acolytes know to be the present.

Successful Awareness Tests reveal that most of this activity to board up and secure the buildings seems recent. Here and there anti-imperial graffiti has been plastered and statues of saints and the sign of the Aquila has been recently defaced in many places, often with a strange scratched symbol like a downward pointing, three-pronged claw. Succeeding at a **Difficult (-10) Awareness Test** for those that have been to Sinophia Magna before also reveals one further but very disturbing fact—half the stars of Sinophia's night sky are missing, replaced in the heavens by empty, black voids.

Eyes in the Night

The longer the Acolytes spend walking Sinophia's empty alleyways, the greater the chance their movements will be observed and shadowed from the darkened rooftops. Spotting their observers, who are Twilight Stalkers (see page 67 of the NPCs and Antagonists appendix), is a **Very Hard (-30) Awareness Test**, as these creations are silent and almost invisible against the night. If attacked, the stalkers retreat, and other stalkers attempt to follow them. They do not attack until the Acolytes either reach the bridge of crucifixion or until they are eventually ambushed by the traitor (see further on) if they lose their way.

The Last Faithful Man

After some time wandering the streets and alleyways of Sinophia Magna looking for answers, the Acolytes hear the sounds of a man's voice shouting drunkenly in the night. Following this voice to its source is an easy matter, and by the foot of an old statue to Saint Drusus, a ragged looking middle-aged man is shouting out doom upon the city, calling its inhabitants "foul heretics" and singing jumbled snatches of Imperial Psalms.

The figure wears the torn cassock of an Imperial preacher and has been badly beaten. He has a ragged, wild appearance and one of his cheeks has been badly burned very recently. He reeks of cheap spirits and a half-empty bottle of Gorsk Gyn is clutched in his trembling hands. This man, who is indeed an Imperial preacher called Queneas Stiles, a former Imperial Guardsmen from Baraspine and now itinerant preacher. In a lamentable condition both in body and mind, Stiles is very far gone; half-starved, tortured and driven to the edge of sanity by fear, he has sought solace in drink on what he believes to be his final night of life. Getting any sense out of him

is a tricky task, as he is not so much unwilling to talk as he is incoherent and rambling, but the right questions and responses illicit useful answers.

Charm Tests made against Stiles are at a base difficulty of Challenging (+0), while Interrogation and other forceful means are Very Hard (-30). However, if the questioner is a Cleric or clearly has extensive religious knowledge they can bring into play, the difficulty of either drops by one level.

The GM should feel free to have Stiles tell them what he will, while Table 3-1: Stiles' Tale, should be used for guidance.

The longer the questioning goes on the more voluble and agitated Stiles becomes, eventually spluttering, "Go to the bridge, the saint's bridge, there you will see what becomes of those who remain loyal! Go if your faith is strong enough, you are needed there!" Stiles finishes by flinging his arm in the direction of a large bridge over a broad canal in the distance, before collapsing insensible to the ground in a mixture of exhaustion and mental collapse.

The Bridge of the Crucified

The area of Sinophia Magna's great Sabbatine Bridge has been turned into an execution yard for those who would not bow to the will of their new masters. This large and ornately decorated bridge across the sea inlet is now covered with a tangled profusion of crude metal 'X' beams, on to which men and women have been bound with coils of barbed wire. Most of them are now dead, but a few still moan and cry out into the unforgiving night. At the foot of the bridge beneath a (literally) defaced statue of the Beati Saint Sabbat, between two great stone bowls that burn with white flame, a hooded and cowed figure awaits the Acolytes, an old friend to greet them.

This figure should be an individual from the Acolyte's past and a former ally. Presented here, this traitor is Fihad Constantine—a once loyal Arbitrator encountered as an ally in the adventure **DAMNED CITIES**. If this adventure has not been played (or, for example, Constantine died during its events), the GM should replace him with another former ally of the player-characters, now several years older and far more malign. Particularly vicious GMs may wish to make the traitor the Acolytes meet their own Inquisitor gone over to the other side.

Once the Acolytes approach, the figure loses the cowl covering his face, clearly showing his identity; a former ally now older by some decade, his features grown gaunt and deathly pale.

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"The shades showed me who had come, but I had to see you with my own eyes to believe it. You died, all those years ago on Mara; at least so we all believed. But no matter if you are still Mara's puppets, or if it is Haarlock you now serve!

Do you imagine that old spider had defeated us? That he had won? We shall have our revenge yet, we are not defeated! Look above you and see the dead stars circling at our will! But you will not live to see our victory!"

At this point, Constantine's jaw opens impossibly wide and he lets out an inhuman bass roar. Twilight Stalkers scuttle up from the sides of the bridge and leap from the rooftops behind the Acolytes and they are caught in a desperate struggle for their lives. The number of Twilight Stalkers in the ambush should equal the number of surviving Acolytes and their NPCs allies +1, and they and Constantine's profiles can be found in the NPCs and Antagonists section. Note that if the GM is using another character in place of Constantine as the traitor, his Shadow Shrouded trait should be added to the new NPC's profile (see page 64).

Should the Acolytes be victorious over their former ally, a mirror-door appears in the carved archway base of the plinth of the desecrated statue of the saint.

TABLE 3-1 STILES' TALE

Degree of Success	Result
One	"Came in on a refugee ship from Baraspine. Fallen into heresy, damned all of them, damned apostates, turned their backs on the God Emperor and whispering to shadows, whole world gone over now. Started slow, war, rumour of wars, stars dying, lights going out."
Two	"The fools have struck a bargain with the servants of the dark, sold their souls for empty lies, the Quorum was first and the rest followed, and now we die every night, slow, crawling death, no more than we all deserve!"
Three	"They beat me, tortured me and showed me their true faces, but I wouldn't forsake my faith; they couldn't make me a traitor. Branded me with their mark but I burned it away. I shall not die apostate! The Emperor protects!"
Four or More	"Afraid, all afraid, throne agents fought them off on Malfi they say but went no further. Even thrice-cursed Haarlock won't save us, not like he stopped them on Solomon. Years ago they tore down his tower you see, and now he won't help us, none of them will, punishment for our pride and our sins."



THE LAST ECLIPSE

VANISHING POINT

•

DARK STAR RISING

•

THE FINAL
CONFRONTATION

•

RESOLUTION AND
REWARDS

PART IV: THE LAST ECLIPSE

"The future is no more or less than the hell we fashion for ourselves in the present and gift to our children."

—Inquisitor Arnulf Gentry, Notes on the Ninth
Adrantian Trade War.

When the GM determines that the surviving Acolytes have walked Haarlock's path enough, and learned of past and possible future, a final mirror-door opens before them leading to the final stop in the present on Dusk as the Tyrant Star begins to rise.

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"As you walk through the shimmering gate, you know something is different immediately. You shudder at your core as if something has trodden on your grave, and the hot air hits you like a gust from a furnace. Your find yourself on a blasted, withered hilltop where nothing grows, while at the hill's foot is a dense forested swamp that goes on as far as the eye can see through the dim hazy light. In the heavily clouded sky above you, a sun burns faintly as if setting, although it is clearly at the height of noon on another world, while nearby it lurks a deeper and unsettling shadow.

Behind you, you realise with a shock that the mirror-door has not disappeared but now remains imprisoned between two rough posts of deep black stone that jut from the hill's crest. The mirror-door shivers and fluxes angrily, pale arcs of ghostly force rippling across its surface. Beyond it you can faintly make out the shape of the Blind Tesseract, Haarlock's machine, and the Iron Daughter, her hands covering her face as if she were weeping."

If any of the Acolytes are natives of this infamous world or have travelled here before they know immediately that they have set foot on Dusk, a feral world on the very edge of known space. They are also confronted with the fact that they are again fully real; tiredness washes over them (everyone gains a level of Fatigue) and they become acutely aware that they are extremely hungry and thirsty and of the stifling warmth and weight of the gear they are wearing to combat Mara's climes.

VANISHING POINT

Any objects brought with them from the different worlds and possibilities shown them by the Tesseract seem to rapidly tarnish, becoming faded and brittle before crumbling to dust in scant minutes; energy cells found there die in seconds, organics decay and data vanishes into static fog, never to be recovered. Living creatures brought through from the other side that did not walk through from the Blind Tesseract on

Mara at the start of the journey sicken after a few moments on Dusk before dissolving soundlessly into smoke and vanishing, leaving only an empty pile of rapidly decaying cloth and corroded metal.

Of the Acolytes' walk though the corridors of eternity, only battle scars and memories remain.

THE WELCOMING PARTY

As the Acolytes take stock of their situation on the hill at what they can assume is their journey's end, the GM should allow them to get their bearings and piece together what they have discovered. Although they can hear ominous animal sounds from the swampland below the hill, they remain unmolested for the time being, and now is as good a time as any for them to rest, recuperate a little, and work out their next plan of action.

Attempts to further investigate the still open mirror door or the two posts that bind it in place, reveals that a crackling pulse of ghostly light flares whenever something draws close to its aperture. Anything hurled into it comes out in rapidly disintegrating fragments on the other side. The posts themselves are made of the same dark material as the keystone.

Above them, the ominous shadow behind the clouds is slowly moving ever closer to the sun.

After some time (an hour or so, or as soon as the Acolytes decide they might move off the hill), lantern light appears at the edge of the forest and a party of a dozen men enter the clearing at the foot of the hill. These are natives, Ephraim Ryder and some of the men folk of the nearby settlement of Night Rising. They have been 'asked' by the Dusk Hag (who they refer to only as "the Ol' Lady") to bring them to her in return for her continued protection during the period of the Tyrant Star's presence in Dusk's star system (a rare but hardly unknown event on Dusk the locals know as the 'Witchin' Dark' which comes every generation or two to this benighted world). Although visibly well-armed, Ephraim and his people make no aggressive moves and only fight if they are attacked or if the Acolytes flatly refuse to come with them. For the natives, even though the Acolytes' group is visibly far more powerful than they are, the alternative to carrying out their mission (based on whose behalf they have been sent) is worse than anything the Acolytes have to offer by way of threat.

Read aloud or paraphrase Ephraim's request as needed.

"The Ol' Lady sent us to fetch you. She wants a word or two with you and it don't do to keep her waiting. Said you were to come now as time was pressing and the Witching Dark comes soon. She says you could come with us, or stand around and wait while what you'd seen comes to pass. . . she said you'd know what she meant."

Ephraim and his people remain taciturn at best, but answer earnestly to say they are doing what "she" wants to keep their kin safe in the coming time.

The Natives

Ephraim and his men are dressed in well-made and maintained leathers and rough spun silks. Several carry heavy hooded lanterns on poles, all are armed with blades and hatchets and several carry black powder weapons or steel-tillered crossbows. With them is a young woman with deep blue ribbons tied around her hands and hair and ornate facial tattoos. Characters with Psyniscience, on passing a **Routine (+20) Test**, immediately recognise her as a fairly powerful but untrained native Psyker.

AN AUDIENCE WITH THE DUSK HAG

Following Ephraim and the party (after a few short twists and turns through the mist-shrouded swampland) brings them to the entrance of the Dusk Hag's abode, so unexpectedly that even Ephraim and his party are startled, if not surprised. (Any lengthy excursion into the swamp without a guide finds the Hag, although after a much rougher journey to get there—this is, after all, the Hag's will).

Read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"The tangled swamp opens before you into a moss-strewn clearing centred around what appears to be the ancient wreck of a space craft. Its belly is torn open and a strange dwelling bedecked in all manner of hanging totems and trinkets has been created within. The shadows of this place are utterly impenetrable, like a rip torn open in the world to an abyss beyond, and a heavy silence rests upon the place.

At the centre of the open-fronted dwelling on a rickety chair sits an immeasurably old woman of imperious bearing, her withered skin the colour of dirty ivory and her hair wild and matted. Under one hand lays a broken servo-skull and a narrow steel canister which she is caressing absently with her long black fingernails, while behind her chair something reddish-black and sinewy coils too deep in the shadows to make out.

"We brought them as you asked Ol'Lady." Ephraim calls out nervously.

The old woman nods slowly and pronounces in a voice that sounds like broken glass over a tombstone, "So you did, Ephraim Ryder, so you did, now go back to your kin."

"So," the old woman speaks "That blind fool Haarlock finally found himself some more fools to walk in his path, eh? Well congratulations, you made it through the corridors of time alive, and ahead of him coming back, the choice is yours now."

The Dusk Hag wants no more than to look them in the eye, and see the events that she herself has set in motion come to fruition. The Hag is a dark power of the Warp on its chosen ground, and the Acolytes are best inclined to not try her patience. Any display of force or aggression is met with a scornful display of just what she can do: weapons turn to serpents in the user's hands, bones shatter at her whim and a psyker's powers are turned back on themselves. Should something more be needed to graphically illustrate such folly, the thing around her chair uncoils; Acolytes who were involved in the Sinophian affair represented in **DAMNED CITIES** will recognise this baleful entity as the daemon in the mirror (use the daemonhost profile on page 358 of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook if needed). The daemon eagerly attacks unruly Acolytes to the point where they are more inclined to civility, and is careful not to kill any of them.

If the Acolytes have any remaining questions about Haarlock and the Legacy she answers them mockingly. She also happily relates to them exactly what's about to happen next:

"He came to me when everything else he tried failed, and even then, his pride would not let him beg. No, not that one. Will of iron enough to overturn the universe if he could, heh! He'd walked the past and found he could change 'nuthin, walked the future and found nothing that wouldn't turn to dust in his hands.

'What can I do?' he asked me 'Where can I find the power?' Hah! 'Hag tell me!' he demanded!

"He paid my price," she says, tapping the canister beneath her nails before carrying on, "So I told him. I told him the only place that would end his desires would be the black star, and that's where he went and that's where he's reckon' to return from. Only what'll walk back wearing his face, not even I knows."



"But he needed someone on this side you see, needed a link of blood and desire to turn the key of his machine, a beacon to light his way across the abyss beyond the Warp, to come back where no-one had come back from before, and you lit that beacon up for him! You an' the others with your murderin' and your lying and struggle, all callin' him back across."

"Now the dark star is rising over this world, blotting out its own sun, just as it did the day he walked into its embrace, and on that hill his foot's gonna fall again."

If the Acolytes haven't worked it out yet, the Hag supplies their answer, for a price: an immortal soul, a Psyker's gifts, a gunfighter's right hand; she'll take what the asker most values. The answer: destroy the soul trap—the stone posts on Haarlock's hill—and Erasmus can't put footfall back in the Blind Tesseract and return to this reality. Let events take their course and he returns to this waiting world and his ship waiting for him to board it.

The Acolytes leave the Hag with her laughter sounding in their ears, and in mere moments are back at the foot of Haarlock's hill as the edge of a black shadow starts to cut across the face of Dusk's muted sun.

DARK STAR RISING

The Acolytes have come to the final crossroads of a single decision: to stop Haarlock's return by destroying the Soul Trap or to stand by and allow it to happen. They have only minutes as Dusk's Sun is swallowed by the Tyrant Star to make the decision.

This is a decision that much they have seen might have left them in two minds about, and the consequences of either outcome for the Calixis Sector are both uncertain and

QUICK, BLOW IT UP!

Having come through, the Acolytes may well spontaneously come to the decision to destroy the stone posts holding the mirror-door in place. This is absolutely the right choice, even though doing so without the Hag's knowledge is not an easy thing to do (see Destroying the Soul Trap on this page). Should they succeed they still prevent Haarlock's return and the GM can have them meet the Hag anyway to provide them with some answers.

potentially dire. But here and now, they are the only authority; only they can make this choice and decide the future fate of billions. In this, they are the hand of the Holy Ordos, the final word is theirs.

DESTROYING THE SOUL TRAP

Destroying the soul trap is not so quick or easy as it may look, a fact they quickly discover for themselves. Alternatively, if they have met the Hag's price, she informs them just what needs to be done.

The stone posts themselves are all but invulnerable to harm (50 AP and 25 Wounds each) but the ground in which they are set is not. The mirror-door can be freed by knocking one of the posts out of alignment by more than 30° or so. This can be done by a lot of frantic and heavy digging (the posts descend about 35cm into the ground where they join into natural stone sockets) and then levering one of them out of alignment, an act which requires three successes or more on a **Hard (-20) Strength Test** using a levering object, or they can use an explosive charge of some sort (a couple of Frag grenades do the trick) on the base.

THE FINAL CONFRONTATION: GHOSTS ON THE HILL

This is an optional encounter if the GM feels that the pacing of the adventure would benefit from a climactic battle to add emphasis to the Acolyte's difficult choice in this final scene. Should the Acolytes seek to stop Haarlock from returning, a final trap left behind by Haarlock's dark arts is triggered, and gibbering spectres from the past are summoned to the attack.

In this encounter, the Game Master should judge which of the previous adversaries connected to the Haarlock's Legacy (including any he may have created himself) would make the best opponents for the Acolytes. In many cases, this means selecting a foe that had been a particularly annoying thorn in the group's side (offering them another chance to take him down!). Alternatively, the GM may also select the opponent that the group enjoyed defeating before.

Whatever the GM's choice, each selection should then be given the alterations suggested below.

FINAL CONFRONTATION ENEMY PACKAGE

Wounds: The creature reduces its wounds by half, rounding down.

Traits: The creature gains the Phase and Warp Weapon Traits.

Below is a list of suggested opponents to return as vengeful ghosts in the final confrontation:

- Greel (see page 226 in **DISCIPLES OF THE DARK GODS**)
- Marshal Skarman (see page 58 in **DAMNED CITIES**)
- The Daemon in The Mirror (see page 58 in **DAMNED CITIES**)
- The Widower (see page 61 in **TATTERED FATES**)
- Heron Mask (see page 58 in **TATTERED FATES**)
- Jackal Mask (see page 58 in **TATTERED FATES**)

There is another option the acolytes may have to take if time presses, and it is an option the Hag gleefully offers them; a solution more certain but also requiring sacrifice: short out the mirror-door. In order to do this a living being must stand half in the gate and take their own life. The resulting psychic release shorts out the connection and destroys the soul trap.

If either of these is done, the mirror-door is torn apart in a spectacular haze of silver light and a thunderclap of noise, and the posts shatter explosively, showering the area with fragments (inflicting 2d10 R damage to everything within 5 metres of the hill's summit.)

Moments later, as the eclipse arrives and Dusk is plunged into cold darkness, the image of the black sun forms with the furious outline of a contorted human face with blazing white eyes. A howl of rage and frustration echoes across the surface of Dusk as hurricane-force winds rip through the swamps and forests, scattering the witnesses to the ground with the force of the turbulence in the air. The face fades and the eclipse passes as lighting and thunder break on the horizon.

Haarlock has been thwarted and his Legacy ended.

THE TRAVELLER RETURNS

It may be that, through conscious choice to allow it to come to pass or because the Acolytes fail in their efforts at the last, the eclipse reaches its zenith and Haarlock comes through.

Should this happen, moments after the eclipse becomes total a pall of darkness descends on Dusk. A silver grey tracery flows down from the heavens, carrying with it a hazy, blurred shape, as if it was a form made of smoke, to the edge of the mirror-door. The Acolytes cannot move or act; it is as if they were moving with glacial slowness while the world speeds on around them.

With no further fanfare or display, the vaporous form pauses a second at the door and turns to the Acolytes. It raises an indistinct hand, forefinger and thumb together in a circle, to the grey shadow of its face where its right eye would be, then steps through the opening. On the other side, a tall, dark coated figure with a pallid bald head and a black ebony walking stick topped with a golden spider, steps into the chamber of the Blind Tesseract, and the mirror-door shuts off behind him.

On Dusk, the light of the Tyrant Star shines down, and the

swamps and forest resound to the unnatural cries of predators and worse things awoken from their slumber. The Acolytes, once more in control of their faculties, are left alone with the truth of what they have done.

RESOLUTION

AS **DEAD STARS** concludes, the Acolytes are left stranded on Dusk with the consequences of their actions, and getting off the planet again and reporting what has transpired to the Holy Ordos (and chances are that's quite a lot to report!) are further adventures in themselves, left to the GM to determine.

If they have stopped Haarlock, they can console themselves that they have prevented a major threat to the Calixis Sector from occurring, but should be left with grim forebodings of what the future may hold.

If this is the case, they may recover (remove) 1D5 Insanity Points and gain a Fate Point. If the Acolyte has successfully completed at least three Haarlock Legacy adventures they also gain the special elite advance Haarlock's Bane (see below).

If they allowed Haarlock to return, they must live with the knowledge that they have unleashed a terror on the Calixis Sector that it is ill-prepared for and that dark days are ahead, but for what ultimate good or evil only time will tell.

If this is the case they gain 1d5 Insanity Points and gain a Fate Point. If the Acolyte has successfully completed at least three Haarlock Legacy adventures, they also gain the special elite advance Marked by Dark Fates (see below).

Regardless of the outcome, all surviving acolytes who played through **DEAD STARS** should receive XP rewards for their efforts. This award is left in large part for the GM to decide based just on how much the player-characters did, and what odds they faced. Broadly speaking a reward of 100 to 200 XP per game session is appropriate for sufficiently challenged, engaged player-characters, with +200 XP rewarded for each rival faction the Acolytes had the primary role in defeating. In addition, any Acolyte that took an active role in the adventure's conclusion, both in terms of making the decision and carrying it out, should gain +250 XP.

HAARLOCK'S BANE

The Acolyte has travelled far, seen terrible things and had a hand in stopping a plot to release a great evil from beyond space and time. Such events cannot help but change a person.

Effect: The Acolyte counts Fear ratings for Warp entities as 1 level lower than they actually are (so Fear 4 becomes Fear 3 for example), and has a +10 to all Awareness tests to notice localised Warp disturbances and time distortion phenomena.

MARKED BY DARK FATES

The Acolyte has seen the dark underbelly of the Calixis Sector, experienced the tangled and arcane horrors that may represent its future and perhaps has been instrumental in bringing them closer to fruition. In doing so, his soul has been marked by darkness.

Effect: The Acolyte reduces any Corruption damage caused by Warp Shock by -1 per instance, and whenever he spends a Fate Point while in combat with a Warp Entity, roll 1d10. On a roll of 7+, the Fate Point is immediately recovered.

APPENDIX I: NPCs AND ANTAGONISTS

This appendix is divided into two parts. Major NPCs describes the other characters that play an important role in the plot of **DEAD STARS**. As such, they are each detailed individually. The people and creatures listed in the Masses section instead reflect less focal types of NPCs that may be encountered in the course of events.

All of the NPCs in this section have had their strength bonus (plus any other bonuses) included in the profiles for applicable weaponry and equipment. It is also important to note that NPCs are not necessarily bound to follow the same strictures for their profiles as player characters.

MAJOR NPCs

INQUISITOR HERROD—LEGATE OF THE TYRANTINE CABAL



Inquisitor Herrod is a cybernetically resurrected monster who serves as part of the secret inner circle of the Tyrantine Cabal. Herrod was once a handsome, energetic and brilliant Inquisitor who was held in high esteem by his peers. This vibrant and dashing Herrod is long dead, and most within the Holy Ordos think that he perished utterly at the hands of the Vile Savants. In truth, however, Herrod lives: through the patronage of hidden masters within the Adeptus Mechanicus what little of him that remained was given the blessing of a resurrection to a second life of metal, pistons and gears. A hunched figure swathed in a black cloak and hood, Herrod retains no flesh and only the thinnest semblance of humanity. His face is a death mask of yellow flesh pulled over steel and brass, while his voice is a nightmare patchwork of phonic sounds gathered from recordings of the Inquisitor's voice before he died for the first time.



Inquisitor Herrod Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
58	39	(8) 48	(8) 48	26	55	37	58	21

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 25

Skills: Awareness (Per)+10, Ciphers (Acolyte, War Cant, Inquisition) (Int) +20, Command (Fel) +20, Common Lore (Adeptus Arbites, Administratum, Ecclesiarchy, Imperial Creed, Imperial Guard, Imperium) (Int) +20, Common Lore (Machine Cult, Tech, War) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +10, Evaluate (Int), Forbidden Lore (Cults, Heresy, Inquisition, Ordos, The Tyrant Star) (Int) +20, Forbidden Lore (Psykers, Warp) (Int) +10, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology) (Int), Inquiry (Fel) +10, Interrogation (WP) +20, Intimidate (Str) +20, Literacy (Int) +20, Logic (Int) +10, Navigation (Surface) (Int), Scholastic Lore (Archaic, Bureaucracy, Cryptology, Legend) (Int) +20, Scholastic Lore (Imperial Creed, Judgement, Philosophy) (Int) +10, Scrutiny (Per) +20, Search (Per) +10, Secret Tongue (Acolyte, Administratum) (Int) +20, Secret Tongue (Ecclesiarchy) (Int) +10, Secret Tongue (Military) (Int), Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic) (Int) +20.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Armour of Contempt, Autosanguine, Basic Weapon Training (Bolt, Las, SP), Binary Chatter, Blademaster, Blind Fighting, Chem Geld, Combat Master, Fearless, Counter Attack, Crippling Strike, Crushing Blow, Disarm, Disturbing Voice, Feedback Screech (ignore perquisite), Furious Assault, Into the Jaws of Hell, Iron Discipline, Iron Jaw, Mental Fortress, Nerves of Steel, Pistol Training (Bolt, Flame, Las, SP), Prosanguine, Resistance (Cold, Heat, Poisons, Psychic), Strong Minded, Touched by the Fates (2 Fate Points), True Grit, Two Weapon Wielder (Melee).

Traits: Dark Sight, Sturdy, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2).

Armour: Armour plated body (Head 7, Arms 7, Body 7, Legs 7).

Weapons: Integral Hand Flamer built into left forearm (10m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 E; Pen 2; Clip 3; Rld na; Flame), two Lathe forged mono-sabres (see page 147 of **THE INQUISITOR'S HANDBOOK**) (1d10+12 R, Pen 5; Balanced, +10 to WS Tests), Bolt Pistol (30m; S/2/-; 1d10+5 X; Pen 4; Clip 8; Reload Full, Tearing), with three clips of Psycannon Bolts (see page 191 of **THE INQUISITOR'S HANDBOOK**).

Gear: Heavy vulcanised black robes, Good quality Cybernetic body reconstruction (includes Dark Sight system, micro bead, full life support, 3x doses of de-tox with implanted injector), several data slates, Seal of office as Inquisitor.

Herrod's Retinue

The following characters are agents in the service of Inquisitor Herrod: Quin Valentine, Alianna Switch, Junt Yaeger, and Darkly Hand.

QUIN VALENTINE

Quin Valentine is a quiet spoken man whose immaculate appearance, gaunt features and drawling wit belie the fact that he is one of the finest gunslingers that Gunmetal City has ever born. Clad in a dark, high collared coat woven with impact reactive mesh, and carrying only a single pistol, he prefers to kill with a single shot from his custom forged duelling las.

Quin Valentine Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
33	58	31	30	51	38	41	35	42

Movement: 5/10/16/30

Wounds: 11

Skills: Awareness (Per) +20, Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Concealment (Ag), Dodge (Ag) +20, Drive (Ground Vehicle) (Ag), Inquiry (Fel) +10, Interrogation (WP), Shadowing (Ag), Silent Move (Ag), Speak Language (High Gothic, Gunmetal City Hive Dialect, Low Gothic) (Int).

Talents: Crack Shot, Deadeye Shot Hip Shooting, Marksman, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Marksman, Quick Draw, Rapid Reaction, Rapid Reload, Resistance (Fear, Heat, Psychic Powers), Nerves of Steel, Pistol Training (Bolt, Las, SP), Rapid Reaction Sharpshooter.

Armour: Mesh woven coat and carapace chest plate (Arms 3, Body 6, Legs 3).

Weapons: Khayer-Addin Duelling Las (30m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 E; Pen 4; Clip 1; Reload Full; Accurate, Tearing), Hand Cannon (35m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 I; Pen 2; Clip 5; Reload 2 Full).

Gear: Slick clothing, 12 duelling las re-loads, 1 Hand Cannon Clip loaded with Blessed Ammunition, envirosuit.

ALIANNA SWITCH

Alianna Switch is a hardened killer who learned her skills in the furnace pits of one of the worst Hives in the sector. Her custom combat gear and years of service to Inquisitor Herrod have not removed the mocking humour from her words, or the kill tattoos and bright flare of dyed hair that speaks of the gaudy murder gangs of Magnagorsk.



Alianna Switch Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
38	41	37	36	43	37	41	44	32

Movement: 4/8/12/24

Wounds: 13

Skills: Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per) +10, Climb (S) +10, Concealment (Ag) +10, Ciphers (Acolyte) (Int) +10, Dodge (Ag) +20, Common Lore (Underworld) (Int) +20, Forbidden Lore (the Inquisition) (Int) +10, Literacy (Int), Secret Tongue (Acolyte) (Int) +10, Security (Ag) +10, Silent Move (Ag) +10, Speak Language (High Gothic) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int).

Talents: Basic Weapon Training (SP, Las, Bolt), Crack Shot, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive, Power), Peer (Underworld) Pistol Training (Bolt, SP, Las), Sharpshooter.

Armour: Hardened Body Glove (Arms 3, Body 3, Legs 3).

Weapons: Overcharged Long Las (150m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 E; Pen 1; Clip 20; Reload Full; Accurate, Reliable) fitted with a Red-Dot Sight, Hand Cannon (35m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 I; Pen 2; Clip 5; Reload 2 Full), Power Sword (1d10+8 E; Pen 6; Balanced, Power Field).

Gear: Photo-contacts, respirator, micro bead, 3 long las clips, envirosuit.

TOUCHED BY THE FATES (TALENT)

Prerequisites: Non Player Characters only; they must have free will. This talent may not be applied to Daemons and other non-living creatures.

The NPC has a number of Fate Points equal to half their Willpower Bonus (rounding up). They may use these Fate Points in exactly the same way as Player Characters and may even "burn" a Fate Point to survive death and destruction (if possible), although this should always happen "off camera." In any situation where they would be defeated and the scenario resolved in the Acolytes favour, they simply return another day (probably for revenge!) In addition, the rules for Righteous Fury also apply to this NPC.

IMPROVED NATURAL WEAPONS (TRAIT)

This creature's attacks are powerful enough to crush plasteel or punch through armour. The creature's natural weapons no longer count as Primitive.

JUNT YAEGER

Junt Yaeger is a slab-fleshed former naval armsman who has seen too much by far, and has taken wounds to his mind that, if they were to his body, would have left him as a broken puppet of flesh and bone. Though not entirely stable or predictable, he has proven himself loyal to Herrod; a virtue the resurrected Inquisitor has always prized, and has been rewarded with continued opportunities to fight the enemies of the Imperium in what ever secret war his master wishes.

Junt Yaeger Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
38	46	45	54	31	34	37	25	35

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 16

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Carouse (T), Ciphers (Acolyte) (Int), Climb (S), Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Common Lore (War, Imperial Guard) (Int) +10, Drive (Ground Vehicles) (Ag) +10, Forbidden Lore (the Inquisition) (Int), Intimidate (S) +10, Literacy (Int), Secret Tongue (Acolyte) (Int) +10, Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int).

Talents: Basic Weapon Training (SP, Las, Bolt), Hatred (Daemons), Iron Jaw, Jaded, Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Primitive), Paranoia, Pistol Training (Las, SP), Rapid Reload, Resistance (Psychics), True Grit.

Armour: Storm Trooper Carapace (Head 6, Arms 6, Body 6, Legs 6).

Weapons: Meat Hammer Scattergun (30m; S/-/-; 2d5+6 X; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload 3 Full, Scatter, Tearing), Hand Cannon (35m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 I; Pen 2; Clip 5; Reload 2 Full), Chainsword (1d10+6 R; Pen 2; Balanced, Tearing), 2x Frag Grenades (12m; S/-/-; 2d10 X; Pen 0; Clip 1; Blast (4), 2x Blind Grenades (12m; S/-/-; Clip 1; Smoke), 2x Krak Grenades (12m; S/-/-; 2d10+4 X; Pen 6; Clip 1).

Gear: Infra-red goggles, photo-contacts, respirator, micro bead, 24 shotgun shells, 5 hand cannon clips.

DARKLY HAND

Darkly Hand is an assassin who has no life beyond the execution of his craft and no emotion other than devotion to the master that created him. His name erased, his personally cleaned, and his identity overwritten, Darkly Hand is a tool of death held in the hand of Inquisitor Herrod. A master of death encased in body fitting night black armour, Hand is a strangely forgettable: one could look directly into his face, study it in minute detail and yet the second one looked away no feature could be recalled.



Darkly Hand Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
55	38	38	41	53	41	49	59	15

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 15

Traits: Untouchable (see page 28 in **DISCIPLES OF THE DARK GODS**).

Skills: Acrobatics (Ag) +20, Awareness (Per) +20, Ciphers (Acolyte) (Int), Climb (S) +20, Common Lore (Imperium) (Int) +10, Concealment (Ag) +20, Dodge (Ag) +20, Deceive (Fel) +20, Literacy (Int), Security (Ag) +20, Shadowing (Ag) +20, Silent Move (Ag)+20, Secret Tongue (Acolyte) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic and High Gothic) (Int), Tech-Use (Int), Tracking (Int) +10.

Talents: Assassin Strike, Basic Weapon Training (Las, SP, Primitive), Blade Master, Fearless, Combat Master, Disarm, Heightened Senses (Sight, Sound, Smell, Touch and Hearing), Leap Up, Lightning Attack, Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Primitive, Power, Shock), Pistol Training (Bolt, Las, SP, Primitive), Step Aside, Swift Attack, Unremarkable.

Armour: Synskin coated Xeno mesh (Head 6, Body 6, Arms 6, Legs 6).

Weapons: Two Power Swords (1d10+8 E; Pen 6; Balanced, Power Field), Custom Needle Pistol (30m; S/-/-; 1d10 R; Pen 4; Clip 7; Reload Full; Accurate, Toxic).

Gear: Clip Harness, Multikey, Rebreather, Photo-Visor, 2x Needle Clips.

SERGEANTS CHILDRES AND MAKRADE

Childres and Makrade are the sergeants commanding the squads assigned to the Acolytes' authority for their mission to Mara. Both are the product of years of training and hardening on the battle fields of the Margin Crusade and in the Soot Warrens of Tranch. Childres is tall, dark skinned and lean, with the predatory features of the deep desert nomads of Maccabeus Quintus, while Makrade is a muscular giant whose clean shaven head and face are covered in tattooed flowing lines of sacred script. Both speak little unless spoken to but are highly devoted servants of the God-Emperor and serve and obey the Acolytes to their last breath.

Sergeants Childres and Makrade Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
43	45	38	40	30	35	35	42	26

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 14

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Ciphers (War Cant) (Int) +10, Climb (S), Command (Fel), Common Lore (Imperial Guard) (Int) +10, Common Lore (Imperium, War) (Int), Intimidate (S) +10, Literacy (Int), Navigation (Surface) (Int), Secret Tongue (Military) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Swim (S).

Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Bolt, Las, SP), Insanely Faithful, Iron Discipline*, Into the Jaws of Hell*, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Nerves of Steel, Pistol Training (Bolt, Las, Plasma, SP), Resistance (Cold, Heat, Fear)

Armour: Storm Trooper Carapace (Head 6, Arms 6, Body 6, Legs 6)

Weapons: Sollex "Death Light" Lasgun (80m; S/3/-; 1d10+5 E; Pen 2; Clip 18; Reload Full), Autopistol (30m; S/-/6; 1d10+2 I; Pen 0; Clip 18; Reload Full), Plasma Pistol (30m; S/-/-; 1d10+6 E; Pen 6; Clip 10; Reload 4 Full; Recharge, Overheats), Mono-Sword (1d10+3 R; Pen 2, Balanced), 2x Frag Grenades (9m; S/-/-; 2d10 X; Pen 0; Clip 1; Blast (4)), 1x Photon Flash Grenade (9m; S/-/-; Special; Pen 0; Clip 1)

Gear: Uniform, 2 spare Lasgun Clips, 1 Plasma Flask, Micro-Bead, Respirator, Photo-Visor

*The effects of Childres and Makrade's Iron Discipline and Into the Jaws of Hell talents only apply to Maccabian Janissaries under their command.

ASTROPATH SILINUS

Silinus is an experienced Astropath of senior years, who has served the Inquisition on many occasions though seldom in harms way. She is tall, thin and her skin is aged to the colour of dry parchment and wrinkled around the empty pit of her eyes. Despite her age, Silinus holds herself rigid with pride, and conducts herself in a commanding way, with every word implying that everyone else is a fool. She believes that she is the most experienced, capable person on the mission, and while she does submit to the command of her master, to serve these other Acolytes of his, it rankles with her. Her pride and condescension hide a will that is weaker than both she and her master believe, and when confronted with the true horror that waits on Mara, it may be her undoing.

Astropath Silinus Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
10	15	20	30	27	44	38	35	20

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 10

Skills: Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Forbidden Lore (the Warp) (Int) +10, Psyniscience (Per) +20, Speak Language (High Gothic, Low Gothic +10), Secret Tongue (Acolyte).

Talents: Meditation, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Power Well, Psy Rating 3.

Psychic Powers: (Telepathy): Enhance Phenomena, Precognition, Projection, Resist Possession, Sense Presence, Telepathy.

Traits: Blind, Soul-bound.

Weapons: Staff (1d10+2 I; Balanced, Primitive).

Gear: Hooded green robes.

NOVATOR BENHAMIN NOSTROMO

Benhamin Nostromo is an old man. Painfully thin and hunched by his years, his skin is so pale as to be almost transparent, he moves with a strange shuffling gait and his manner is strange and unworldly. Once the principal of a great lineage of Navigators who served Erasmus Haarlock, Nostromo was one of his closest confidants and most trusted allies. Abandoned on Mara after his use was spent, he is now a half-mad hermit clad in stinking rags and furs. Yet his abandonment and cracking mind has not removed the power of his mind or his skill in reading the tides of the warp. Thanks to Haarlock's curse he lacks the luxury of death. Even if slain, he sooner or later returns to life somewhere in the confines of Mara's Ice station to spend his eternity in the cold darkness.

Novator Benhamin Nostromo Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
20	20	25	25	28	45	62	50	20

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 9

Skills: Awareness (Int), Common Knowledge (Imperium) (Int) +20, Forbidden Knowledge (Warp) (Int) +20, Forbidden Lore (Mutants, Psykers) (Int), Logic (Int) +10, Navigation (Stellar, Warp) (Int) +20, Pilot (Civilian Craft, Spacecraft) (Ag), Psyniscience (Per) +20, Scholastic Knowledge (Astromancy, Interstellar Cartography) (Int) +20, Speak Language (Low Gothic, High Gothic) (Int) +10, Secret Language (Navis Nobilite) (Int) +10.

Talents: Favoured by the Warp, Mediation, Jaded, Psy Rating 2, Resistance (Fear, Psychic) Strong Minded, Pistol Training (Las).

Psychic Powers: Precognition, Psychometry, Resist Possession, Sense Presence, Weaken Veil, White Noise.

Traits: Warp Eye, Phase (at will).

Armour: Concealed mesh vest (Body 4).

Weapons: none

Gear: Hooded robes, ice caked furs and scavenged clothing, threadbare hooded veil, familial seal, personal encrypted com-link (corroded beyond use).

ACCURSED (SPECIAL RULE)

It is Nostromo's curse that he has become bound, body and soul, to the Blind Tesseract and cannot escape its shadow, alive or dead. If he physically leaves the confines of the ice station he slowly fades from existence in a matter of hours and returns there. Likewise, should he die, his body fades and after enduring a few hours of agonizing oblivion, Mara's dark shadows spit him out whole again.

Warp Eye: All true Navigators possess the warp eye, which manifests most often as a third physical eye (although in some cases trepanation and a shutter implant is needed). The eye is the focus of the Navigator's gift and psychic potential. The warp eye acts as a Psy-Focus (see page 151 of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook).

Staring into this eye unveiled is to stare unprotected into the reflected light of the warp. Such a gaze has dire consequences to the sanity of the onlooker and may even prove fatal. Those that look directly into a Navigator's warp eye may suffer its effects. This only occurs within point blank range (three metres or less) and a victim who is aware of the danger can make an Opposed Agility Test to avoid this[†] (or may opt effectively to Fight Blind beforehand). The victim must enter into an opposed Willpower contest with the Navigator. If the victim loses, he suffers 2d10+5 points of Energy damage. This damage is not reduced by armour or Toughness. Anyone taking damage from this power is also Stunned for 1d5 rounds and gains 1d5 Insanity Points. Any sentient creature suffering damage from looking into the Warp Eye must make an immediate **Difficult (-10) Toughness Test** or be slain. If he passes, he suffers 1d10 Insanity points.

[†]This presumes that the Navigator wants the "victim" to look directly into the third eye.

MISS BOOK

Miss Book is, in fact, a Slaught Destructor; a member of that noisome xenos species that has dedicated itself to the art of destruction above all other pursuits. In her human guise, she is a severe looking young woman with bleached white hair drawn back in an elaborate wave of ringlets, wearing unadorned dark crimson merchant attire over an environmental bodyglove. Her real form is a nightmarish semi-humanoid mass of ghastly writhing white worms dripping corrosive blue-white ichor.

Miss Book Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
53	48	(8) 47	(18) 60	56	(10) 55	53	78	26

Movement: 5/10/15/30

Wounds: 40

Skills: Barter (Fel), Chem-Use (Int) +10, Climb (Ag), Concealment (Ag), Common Lore (Int) Imperium, Deceive (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Evaluate (Int), Forbidden Lore (Xenos) (Int) +10, Logic (Int), Intimidation (S) +20, Medicae (Int), Security (Ag), Shadowing (Ag) Silent Move (Ag), Tech-Use (Int) +10 and any others appropriate.

Talents: Ambidextrous, Disarm, Leap Up, Rapid Reaction, Swift Attack, Xeno Weapons Proficiency, Touched by The Fates.

Traits: Dark Sight, Fear Rating 3 (Horrifying), Unnatural Toughness (×3), Unnatural Intelligence (×2), Unnatural Strength (×2), From Beyond, Strange Physiology and Regeneration (recovering 2d5+5 Wounds).

Special Rules

Elasticity: The Slaught can flatten their bodies down or stretch them out to over three times their normal length, increasing their reach and providing a +20 bonus on Grapple and Climb Tests).

Untouchable: The Slaught are soulless beings who cast no shadow in the Warp. Their mere presence acts to inhibit and disrupt psychic energy to such an extent that even humans with no psychic ability whatsoever grow uncomfortable and fractious around them.

Psychic Invulnerability: The creature is completely immune to Psychic Powers, psychic energy and effects directed against them (as well as warp powers, possession, sorcery, Corruption from warp shock etc.) Also, they cannot be detected by means of Psyniscience, Sense Presence or similar abilities. Powers with wider areas in which they are caught simply fail to affect them—although the power may affect other people normally, subject to their disruption effect.

Psychic Disruption: All Psychic Powers and abilities manifested in the immediate area (a radius equal to the Untouchable's Willpower Bonus in metres) have their Threshold increased by 10. Additionally, any associated Test by the psyker (such as Willpower Tests etc.) has its Difficulty increased by -20. Entities subject to Warp Instability suffer double damage from its effects while in this area.

Necrotic: At will, Slaught are able to exude a necrotic fluid from their body tissues. This bile is filled with flesh-eating bacteria and molecular acids that liquefy flesh and even burn through metal. Anyone inflicting a Critical Hit on a Slaught in close combat has a 25% chance of being splashed with the creature's necrotic fluids, suffering 1d10 R Toxic Damage. This splash may be Dodged but not Parried.

Consume Memories: By devouring the cranial matter of an intelligent creature, the Slaught can absorb the victim's memories, knowledge and experiences. Such memories are often a jumbled morass and the Slaught must make a successful Intelligence Test at an appropriate level of Difficulty to select particular information.

Armour: Pulse Field (all ranged attacks striking her reduce their damage by 10 points, Pen does not apply against this effect, close combat attacks are unaffected).

Weapons: Necrotic grasp (1d10+9 R; Tearing, Toxic), Ghostlight Bracers (30m; S/-/6; 2d10 R; Pen 0; Clip unlimited; Rld N/A, Warp Weapon), Antimatter Imploder* (5d10 (×3) E, 25m blast radius, one use).

**This device must be placed like an explosive charge and has a timer with a minimum 5 second delay)*

Gear: Miss Book carries an encrypted vox, a data-slate, a lander codekey, and one of Haarlock's grey psalters—a huge book covered in grey, leathery skin.



CAPTAIN AEDRIK

Aedrik is a raider captain; a human renegade that has thrown his lot in with the Amaranthine Syndicate at the price of his soul and freedom. He is utterly cold blooded and ruthless, and follows any orders given by his Principals to the letter.

Captain Aedrik Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
46	42	38	35	35	31	35	42	23

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 17

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Barter (Fel) +10, Command (Fel) +10, Ciphers (Free Trader) (Int), Carouse (T) +10, Common Lore (Imperium, Tech, Mercantile, Hazeroth Abyss) (Int), Deceive (Fel) +10, Forbidden Lore (Xenos) (Int), Gamble (Int), Interrogation (WP), Inquiry (Int), Literacy (Int), Navigation (Stellar) (Int), Pilot (Ag) (Civil Craft, Spacecraft) +10, Speak Language (Low Gothic, Trade Cant, Ship Cant) (Int), Tech-Use (Int), Trade (Merchant Captain) (Int), Survival (Int).

Talents: Basic Weapon Training (SP, Las, Bolt), Disarm, Jaded, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive, Power, Chain), Pistol Training (SP, Las, Bolt, Plasma), Nerves of Steel.

Armour: Carapace and Mesh (Head 5, Arms 4, Body 6, Legs 5).

Weapons: Bolt pistol (30m; S/2/-; 1d10+5 X; Pen 4; Clip 12; Rld Full, Tearing), compact laspistol (15, S/-/-; 1d10+1 E; Shots 15; Rld Full; Reliable), Power Fist (2d10+7 Power Field, Unwieldy).

Gear: Respirator, personal encrypted vox bead, 2 bolt clips, 2 las clip, environmental bodyglove, lander codekey.

KORT LUTHER

A mercenary and heretek reclaimator, Luther is a dangerous, charming and skilled individual, but is neither a fanatic nor particularly loyal to anything but the thrones he can earn. Luther's other prime motivation is self-interest, but he is no coward and is more than willing to kill if needs be.

Kort Luther Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
30	38	55	45	30	41	38	35	40

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 14

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Carouse (T), Charm (Fel), Climb (S), Common Lore (Imperium, Tech) (Int) +10, Dodge (Ag), Drive (Ground Vehicle) (Ag), Intimidate (S) +10, Pilot (Civil craft, Skimmer) Ag, Secret Tongue (Malfian Underworld) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic, Void Cant) (Int), Survival (Int), Swim (S), Tech-Use (Int) +10, Tracking (Int).

Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Las, SP), Disarm, Melee Weapon Training (Chain, Primitive) Pistol Training (Bolt, Las, SP), Touched by the Fates (1 fate point).

Armour: Worn and mismatched flak and carapace gear (Head 3, Arms 3, Body 5, Legs 3)

Weapons: Hand Cannon with Dumdum bullets (35m, S/-/-; 1d10+6 I; Pen 3; Clip 5; Rld 2Full), Mono-Knife (3m; 1d5+3 R; Pen 2),

Gear: Environmental body glove, respirator, photo visor, hand vox, multitool, data-slates and a rad detector, 1 clip for hand cannon.

GHAST PRIESTKILLER—FALSE PROPHET

Tall and gaunt, Ghost's flesh hangs from his once ample frame. He wears patchwork robes made from those of murdered pilgrims, and over this he is clad in armour of beaten metal. On his face is a crude brazen mask in the shape of a snarling hound. Barely able to contain his rage and bloodlust, Ghost is none the less skilled in warp craft and able to summon the dark energies of the warp even when consumed by a killing frenzy. Thanks to the psycheneuein eggs infecting his brain, he is a pallid echo of his former might.

Ghast Priestkiller Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
38	30	41	42	30	21	33	56	11

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 18

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Command (Fel) +20, Common Lore (Ecclesiarchy, Imperial Creed, Imperium, Underworld) (Int) +10, Deceive (Fel) +20, Dodge (Ag), D, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology, The Warp) (Int) +20, Forbidden Lore (Heresy) (Int) +10, Intimidate (S) +20, Invocation (WP) +20, Psyniscience (Per), Scrutiny (Per), +10, Secret Signs (Occult) (Int) +10, Secret Tongue (Pilgrims of Hayte) +20, Speak Language (Low Gothic, High Gothic) (Int) +10.

Talents: Berserk Charge, Battle Rage, Consumed by Spite, Crushing Blow, Favoured of the Warp, Fearless, Frenzy, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive, Chain), Mental Rage, Pistol Training (SP, Las), Psy Rating 4, Resistance (Psychic), Touched by The Fates.

CONSUMED BY SPITE (TALENT)

The soul and mind of a Pilgrim of Hayte has been so damaged and consumed by bitterness and malice that there is room for little else. Physical suffering has little meaning to one, other than the pleasure of inflicting it on others.

Those with the Talent receive a +10 bonus to resist Fear and any attempt to directly control or influence their minds. In addition, they receive a +30 bonus to resist the effects of Intimidation and Interrogation. They may also ignore the effects of being Stunned with a successful **Difficult (-10) Willpower Test**.

SORCERY!

Though not a true psyker, Ghost Priestkiller can wield the power of the Warp through incantation and sorcery. To reflect the eldritch and esoteric methods he employs, all his powers need a full action to employ and have a threshold +2 higher than they would have had for a psyker. Also, the practice of the dark arts is far from safe, even compared to the use of a psyker's abilities, and he must add +5 to the results of any Psychic Phenomena and Perils of the Warp he incurs.

Psychic Powers: Fearful Aura (9), Inflict Pain (10), Spasm (9), Touch of Madness (13), Fire Bolt (13), Fire Storm (16), Holocaust (25)

Armour: Carapace and ward-stitched hide (Head 4, Body 6, Arms 3, Legs 5)

Weapons: Autopistol (30m; S/—/6; 1d10+2 I; Pen 0; Clip 18; Rld Full), Chain Axe (1d0+10 R, Pen 2, Tearing).

Gear: Ragged red and black robes, 1 spare auto pistol clip, the served hands of a dozen priests (counts as a Psy-Focus).

THE TRAITOR FIHAD CONSTANTINE

Once an ally of the Acolytes and a stalwart upholder of Imperial law as an Arbitrator, Constantine has fallen to darkness and has become a servant of a dark and otherworldly master. All that remains of his former character is seething malice and cold ambition.

Traitor Fihad Constantine Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
36	41	38	38	41	43	38	48	30

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 18

Skills: Athletics (S) +10, Awareness (Per), Charm (Fel), Dodge (Ag), Drive (Ground Vehicle) (Ag), Common Lore (Adeptus Arbites) (Int) +10, Common Lore (Underworld) (Int), Forbidden Lore (Heresy, Warp) +10, Interrogation (WP) +10, Literacy (Int) +10, Scholastic Lore (Judgement) (Int) +10, Scrutiny (Per), Silent Move (Ag) +10, Speak Language (Low Gothic, High Gothic) (Int) +10, Swim (S).

Traits: Shadow Shrouded.

Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Bolt, SP), Disarm, Fearless, Melee Weapon Training (Shock), Pistol Training (Bolt, SP), Takedown, Touched by The Fates (2 Fate Points).

Armour: Carapace (Arms 6, Body 6, Legs 6).

Weapons: Bolt Pistol (30m; S/2/—; 1d10+5 X; Pen 4; Clip 8; Reload Full, Tearing), Mono-Knife (3m; 1d5+3 R; Pen 2).

Gear: Micro-Bead, 3 bolt pistol clips.

SHADOW SHROUDED (NEW TRAIT)

The shadows seem to gather around the character, even in broad daylight, and the black blood in his veins carries strange and potent healing properties.

The character gains +10 to all Concealment and Silent Move Tests and regenerates 1 lost Wound per combat round while still alive.

EPHRAIM RYDER

Ryder is a hunter and clan-father of the settlement of Night Rising on Dusk. He is a hard man, made so by a hard world, but loyal to his kin and surprisingly subtle and quick of mind.

Ephraim Ryder Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
37	33	35	41	36	34	36	46	31

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 15

Skills: Carouse (T), Common Lore (Imperium, Dusk, Clan History) (Int) +10, Deceive (Fel), Speak Language (Low Gothic, Dusk Cant) (Int), Forbidden Knowledge (Warp), Silent Move (AG) +10, Survival (Int) +10, Tracking (Int).

Talents: Die Hard, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Basic Weapon training (Primitive), Nerves of Steel.

Weapons: Serrated Knife (3m, 1d5+3 R; Primitive), Hatchet (1d10+2 R; Primitive, Unbalanced) and double barrelled musket (Basic; 30m; S/—/—; 1d10+2 I; Pen 0; Clip 2; Reload 5 Full; Primitive, inaccurate, unreliable).

Armour: Leather Jack and boots (2 AP body, legs, primitive)

Gear: Gris-gris charm, water flask, 12 bolts or powder and bullets for 12 shots.



THE MASSES

This section details rules for the other creatures and NPCs that form a crucial part of **DEAD STARS**, unnamed though they are. Also, many of the NPCs listed in the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook are perfectly usable and useful in this setting. Most particularly the Astral Spectre, Dispayres, and Unclean Spirits are suitable to the sections in the Ice Station and mines, while the Mutant, Dusk Stalker, and Nightwing may be useful in the sections that take place on Dusk. Most particularly, the GM should make reference to the Mara Strain Psycheneuein found on page 353 of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook, as no doubt these monsters will make an appearance over the course of the adventure!

Critical Damage and the Masses: When you are running a combat involving NPCs and antagonists from the following section, it is recommended that you apply rules for Sudden Death Critical Hits (see page 201 of Chapter VII: Playing the Game in the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook for details).

MACCABIAN JANISSARY

The Maccabian Janissaries are an elite cadre with the Imperial Guard regiments, raised from the planet of Maccabeus Quintus; a dry arid planet of miracles and dust, which is also one of the most holy places within the Calixis Sector. Chosen from the most fanatical members of the Drusian sect of the Imperial creed, the Janissary Cadres are highly trained, well equipped and fanatically devoted to the service they do for the God Emperor of mankind. Their training and doctrines are based on the so called Drusian Trident of endurance, devotion and sacrifice and the black clad and silver masked Janissaries embody all three to the utmost.

Maccabian Janissary Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
38	40	38	40	30	30	35	39	20

Movement: 3/6/9/18

Wounds: 12

Skills: Awareness (Per) +10, Climb (S), Common Lore (Imperial Guard) (Int) +10, Common Lore (Imperium, War) (Int), Intimidate (S) +10, Literacy (Int), Navigation (Surface) (Int), Secret Tongue (Military) (Int), Speak Language (Low Gothic) (Int), Swim (S).

Talents: Basic Weapon Training (Las, SP, special weapon troopers also have either Flamer or Plasma), Insanely Faithful, Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Nerves of Steel, Pistol Training (Las, SP), Resistance (Cold, Heat, Fear).

Armour: Storm Trooper Carapace (All 6).

Weapons: Sollex "Death Light" Lasgun (80m; S/3/-; 1d10+5 E; Pen 2; Clip 18; Reload Full), Autopistol (30m; S/-/6; 1d10+2 I; Pen 0; Clip 18; Reload Full), Mono-Knife (3m; 1d5+3 R; Pen 2), 2x Frag Grenades (9m; S/-/-; 2d10 X; Pen 0; Clip 1; Blast (4)), 1x Photon Flash Grenade (9m; S/-/-; Special; Pen 0; Clip 1).

One squad member also carries a Plasma Gun (90m; S/2/-; 1d10+6 E; Pen 6; Clip 20; Reload 8 Full; Recharge, Overheats), one carries a Flamer (20m; S/-/-; 1d10+4 E; Pen 3; Clip 3; Reload 2 Full; Flame).

Gear: Uniform, envirosuit, 2 Lasgun Clips, Micro-Bead, Respirator, Photo-Visor, the special weapon troopers also have a single spare Plasma Flask or two spare Fuel Canisters.

DYBUK RENDER

Dybuk, or lesser daemonhosts, are created by the Pilgrims of Hayte from humans. A few include predators and animals mutilated and bound with daemonic essences. They are distorted and unnatural things, half-animal and half living nightmare, with blazing pits of unholy fire for eyes; their torn flesh rippling with glowing sigils and ward-bindings.



Dybuk Render Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
38	—	(8) 45	(10) 54	30	17	30	40	—

Movement: 6/12/18/36

Wounds: 19

Skills: Awareness (Per), Climb (Ag) +30, Silent Move (Ag) +10, Swim (S), Tracking (Int) +10.

Traits: Bestial, Daemonic (TB 10), Fear 2, From Beyond, Improved Natural Weapons, Unnatural Speed, Unnatural Strength (x2).

Talents: Dark Sight, Berserk Charge, Die Hard, Frenzy, Furious Assault, Heightened Senses (all), Swift Attack.



Armour: Ward-Stitched flesh (All 3).

Weapons: Savage fangs and hooked claws (1d10+9 R, Pen 3, Tearing).

THE PILGRIMS OF HAYTE

The remaining Pilgrims of Hayte, of which there are about twenty left scattered throughout the ice station (from more than a hundred when they arrived), have devolved in to a savage, cannibalistic rabble and can be represented with either the Cult Zealot or Cult Magus entries in the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook, with the addition of the Consumed by Spite talent (see page 63). Several are also better armed with the following:

Chain Axe (1d10+7 R; Pen 2; Tearing), or Electro-Flail (1d10+5 I; Flexible, Shocking), Autopistol loaded with Manstoppers (30m; S/-/6; 1d10+2 I; Pen 3; Clip 18; Rld Full), 3x Frag Grenades (9m; 2d10 X; Pen 0; Blast (4))

SPLINTER SHADE

Splinter Shades are daemons formed in the warp from the shattered reflections of malicious thoughts, and concealed hatreds that are born in the dark reaches of the mind. When they manifest, they take the form of a shifting mass of ragged, solidified shadow with edges like hooked teeth of darkness. Splinter Shades are particularly drawn to places of brooding malcontent and spiteful violence.

Splinter Shade Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
25	—	35	⁽⁸⁾ 40	20	15	25	40	—

Movement: 2/4/6/12

Wounds: 16

Skills: Psyniscience (WP).

Talents: None.

Traits: Amorphous, Daemonic (TB 8), Dark Sight, Daemonic Presence, Fear 3, From Beyond, Improved Natural Weapons, Strange Physiology, Warp Instability.

Daemonic Presence: All creatures within 20 metres take a -10 penalty to Willpower Tests.

Weapons: Shadow barbs (1d10+3 R; Pen 3; Tearing).

THE COLD DEAD

The animated dead found in Ice Station Mara are frozen corpses possessed by infernal spirits, lesser daemons, and other creatures of the warp. Thanks to the thinness of the barriers between reality and the beyond on Mara they are terrifyingly powerful and difficult to stop. Covered in frost and displaying horrific wounds frozen solid, the dead move in with slow, creaking movements towards any living being whose life they can devour. The deadly chill of their grasps can leech the souls from their victims.

The Cold Dead Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
25	—	⁽¹⁰⁾ 55	⁽⁸⁾ 45	15	15	15	35	—

Movement: 1/2/3/6

Wounds: 15

Skills: Awareness (Per).

Talents: Resistance (Psychic), Melee Weapon Training (Primitive).

Traits: From Beyond, Fear 2, Dark Sight, Improved Natural Weapons (Frozen dead hands and teeth), Unhallowed, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Toughness (x2) and Walking Dead.

Armour: Remains of heavy envirosuits (Head 2, Arms 2, Body 2, Legs 2).

Weapons: Dead Hands (1d10+10 I). Additionally, any living target struck (regardless of whether or not they are wounded) must pass a **Challenging (+0) Toughness Test** or suffer 1d10 Toughness Damage. Hexagramatic Wards and similar defences reduce this Test's difficulty to Routine (+20).

Gear: None.

Unhallowed: Blessed and Holy weapons inflict double damage after the effects of armour are taken into account.

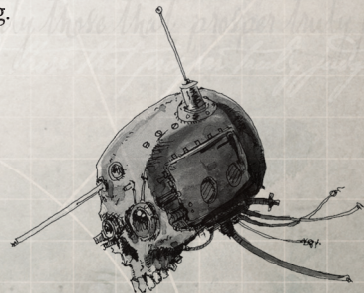
Walking Dead: These creatures do not need to breathe; they do not tire and are immune to poisons and diseases, as well as many environmental hazards. They do not suffer the effects of being Stunned or the penalties for being injured. In addition, only Damage suffered to the Head or Body is counted; any suffered to an Arm or Leg is simply disregarded other than a critical which just renders the limb useless.

SYNDICATE MERCENARY

Use the Heretek or Kill Squad Trooper profile on pages 340-341 of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook, adding an envirosuit and respirator to the listed equipment.

SLAUGHT HARVEST CONSTRUCT

A Slaught Harvest Construct is an amorphous mass of rippling wet flesh the size of an armoured vehicle that floats silently above the ground, searching for sentient matter for its masters to consume with near mindless persistence, never tiring or relenting. Once it finds a victim, it purses him relentlessly, sweeping him up in fat metallic tendrils tipped with pincers; an obscene lamprey like mouth enveloping the victims' head and decapitating him. The heads are preserved in a semi-transparent fleshy sack on the creature's back for the Slaught's later feasting.





Slaught Harvest Construct Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
15	—	41	⁽⁶⁾ 33	32	10	18	38	—

Movement: 2/4/6/12**Wounds:** 35**Skills:** Awareness (Per).**Talents:** Fearless.

Traits: Amorphous, Brutal Charge, Bestial, Enormous, From Beyond, Hoverer (4), Toxic, Necrotic, Strange Physiology, Undying, Unnatural Toughness (x2), Unnatural Senses.

Undying: A Slaught Harvest Construct cannot be harmed by diseases, poisons or toxic effects and may regenerate as long as their bodies remain undestroyed. They have no need to breathe and may survive unaided in vacuum.

Necrotic: Anyone inflicting a Critical Hit on a Slaught Harvest Construct in close combat has a 25% chance of being splashed with the creature's necrotic fluids, inflicting 1d10 R Toxic Damage. This splash may be Dodged but not Parried.

Armour: None.**Weapons:** Acid-dripping pincers (1d10+4 E; Pen 6, Toxic).

TWILIGHT STALKERS

The Twilight Stalkers are Dusk Stalkers (see page 347 of the **DARK HERESY** Rulebook), vicious predatory creatures that have been captured and fitted with servitor augmetics and control systems in order to turn them into peerless night terrors under the control of the dark force that has gained control of Sinophia Magna. Their bodies resemble a frightening hybrid of a withered elderly human and an insect plated in black iron with multiple optic units glowing in the sockets of their eyes.



Twilight Stalker Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
40	30	⁽⁸⁾ 43	⁽¹⁰⁾ 40	53	21	46	28	18

Movement: 5/10/15/30**Wounds:** 20

Skills: Awareness (Per), Climb (S) +20, Concealment (Ag) +20, Deceive (mimic voices and sounds only) (Fel) +20, Dodge +10, Silent Move (Ag) +20.

Traits: Armour Plating, Dark Sight, Fear 2, Machine (4), Improved Natural Weapons (Bone Spars), Shadow Shrouded, Unnatural Strength (x2), Unnatural Agility (x2).

Talents: Catfall, Hard Target, Swift Attack.**Armour:** None (All 6).

Weapons: Bladed Spars (1d10+10 R), implanted Bolas Launcher (30m; S/-/-; —; Pen 0; Clip 4; Reload Full; Inaccurate, Primitive, Snare).

Gear: None.

DENIZEN OF DUSK

The human population of Dusk is a small and ragged collection of extremely hardy individuals touched, some say, by dark forces.



Denizen of Dusk Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
32	26	35	38	30	25	31	40	25

Movement: 3/6/9/18**Wounds:** 12

Skills: Carouse (T), Common Lore (Imperium) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Speak Language (Low Gothic, Dusk Cant) (Int), Forbidden Knowledge (Warp), Silent Move (AG) +10, Survival (Int) +10, Tracking (Int).

Talents: Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Basic Weapons Training (Primitive).

Weapons: Knife (3m, 1d5+2 R; Primitive), Hatchet (1d10+2 R; Primitive, Unbalanced) and crossbow (Basic 30m; S/-/-; 1d10 R; Pen 0; Clip 1; Reload 2 Full; Primitive)

Armour: Leather Jack and boots (2 AP body, legs, primitive)**Gear:** Gris-gris charm, water flask, 12 bolts.

CURSE MAKER

Curse makers are the witches, seers, and prophets of Dusk. These low grade, unsanctioned psykers are relatively common on Dusk and the harvest of the Black Ships rarely manages to fine them. The curse makers live on the margins of settlements on Dusk, at the same time feared and cherished by Dusk dwellers. They can see things that others cannot, warn against danger, speak for the dead and weave curses.



Curse Maker Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	Per	WP	Fel
21	24	26	33	37	31	38	46	31

Movement: 3/6/9/18**Wounds:** 11

Skills: Blather (Fel), Common Lore (Dusk, Clan History) (Int), Deceive (Fel), Deceive (Fel) +10, Forbidden Lore (Daemonology, Psykers, Warp) (Int), Medicae (Int), Psyniscience (WP) +10, Secret Signs (Occult), Sleight of Hand (Ag), Speak Language (Low Gothic, Dusk Cant) (Int), Trade (Int) (Soothsayer, Healer) +10, Survival (Int) +10, Tracking (Int).

Talents: Melee Weapon Training (Primitive), Psy Rating 2, Resistance (Fear, Psychic Powers).

Weapons: Twisted Staff (1d10+2 I; Balanced, Primitive)

Psychic Powers: Call Creatures, Fearful Aura, Healer, Inflict Pain, Whither.

Armour: None

Gear: Charms and trinkets (counts as a psi focus), primitive healer's kit, water flask, hard spirits.

APPENDIX III: PLAYER HANDOUTS

PLAYER HANDOUT I: MARA PLANETARY DATAFAX

CLASSIFICATION: DARK OMEGA

+++Warning! If you are viewing this record without authorisation report immediately to your nearest Holy Ordos Officio for summary judgment+++

+++Hexagramtical Encryption Engaged+++

++File Record Begins++

DATE/STAMP: 5945815.M41

SUBJECT: Mara

Population: None –Mara V (also simply known as Mara) is classified as a Dead World, and the whole system declared off-limits to legitimate Imperial traffic by Inquisitorial Edict.

Inquisitorial access available ONLY by special writ of Conclave (see ordnance lamda-extris-9)

Formerly: Arbites Penal Colony: 743.M41-768.M41: pop approx 32,000, 78% Casualties/planet abandoned

Formerly: Independent Mining Settlements Circa 980.M40-191.M41: population unknown, lost without trace.

Tithe Grade: None

Geography/Demography: Mara V is an ice-world not capable of sustaining Terran life forms without artificial assistance due to the extreme cold and this atmosphere. During the planet's day cycle, high levels of surface radiation owing to solar wind bombardment are likewise inimical to long-term survival on the planetary surface. The majority of the planet's surface is covered by permanent glaciations up to a depth of several kilometres in some areas. Ambient temperature seldom rises sufficiently to allow water to exist in a gaseous state other than by cryomagna irruption.

The only structures evident are those of the former penal colony; the primary installation (Station M-Alpha) was constructed atop an ice plateau in the planet's geologically stable equatorial zone and remains largely intact. The status of thirty-plus mining rigs and prospector bases located elsewhere on Mara's surface that were also abandoned during the world's desertion remains largely unknown.

Governmental Type: None, but the Mara system is still nominally held as a protectorate of the Calixis Sector Adeptus Arbites.

Planetary Governor: Lapsed/None Current. Title formerly held by the office of the First Keeper (the highest ranking penitentiary marshal).

Adept Presence: None

Military: Trade/Economy/Addendum: Former penal colony designated as Ice Station Mara has been abandoned for more than fifty years owing to {SEALED/DELETED}. During the period of its operation the station's inmates conducted mining and prospecting operations for valuable trace metallic elements and high-pressure formed crystal strata in direct tithe to the subsector government. Under direct Arbites oversight, deep core excavations based upon ancient tunnel systems and cave networks extant sub-surface.

Passage to the Mara system is forbidden. Due to the nature of the moral threat perceived to long-term residents in the system, no close blockade is maintained; a distance patrol piquet is maintained at regular intervals. No legitimate Imperial commerce or shipping takes place on or around Mara. Renegade or outlaw traffic to the system is rare but not unknown.

The Mara system is qualified as a Class Mu danger to shipping/navigation in the region.

Thought For The Day: Fates worse than death are the just reward of the curious.



Final Transmission from Prison Colony

Loyal Acolytes,

You are requested and required forthwith under the authority of the God-Emperor of Mankind to submit to this writ and order and serve the most Holy Ordo of His Inquisition, by my writ and the codicil of the most honoured Caidin, Lord Inquisitor-General of the Conclave Calixis.

Firstly I congratulate you. By the dint of your faith, ability and will to survive, you have brought unto our attention a most perfidious threat to the future safety of the Imperium of Man. The events of the Maarlock Legacy, of which you have been a part, I believe poses as grave a risk as the Holy Ordo has seen in the Calixis Sector in many years. It is only by your blood and skill that a greater tragedy has not come to pass.

Proceed now to Mara and finish this matter. The world is forbidden and perilous, but somewhere beneath the haunted corridors and chambers of the forsaken penitentiary mine you may find the Blind Tesseract (See Addendum), the ancient door by which it now seems certain Maarlock left and will soon return. Stop him, and prevent others from taking his secrets for their own.

You must go swiftly, and act with conviction. My agents inform me that others who seek the Legacy are now also aware of the truth and a strong possibility exists that the Holy Ordo's own numbers have been compromised over this matter, although from within or without remains yet to be seen.

Go in the Light of the Golden Throne, serve us honourably and return in victory from the darkness.

Inquisitor Silas Marr



+++ SEALED RECORD ADENDUM—GIMEL OBSIDIAN SUB CLUSTER ANNEX+++

CLASSIFICATION: EBON OMEGA

SUBJECT: Compiled report on the activity of Solomon Haarlock on planet designate Mara—Calyx Expanse

DATE OF ENTRY: 7646.734.M36

Initial reports from our agents hidden within the close circle of Rogue Trader Solomon Haarlock report that the fifth planet of the star system within the unexplored Calyx Expanse (see attached co-ordinates) indicates traces of structures constructed sub-surface of planetoid; constructions first believed to be natural by-products of (now extinct) volcanism. However, investigation and later discoveries proved this to be false. The origin of these constructions is unknown, but our agents relay the opinion of Haarlock's Savant Magister that they predate not only the Imperium, but in all likelihood organic life in this part of the galaxy. These structures, combined with the radiation from the system's violent and anomalous sun and very unusual crystalline mineral deposits, have a profound and unpredictable effect on the fabric of Realspace in the locale of the planet; not only creating fissures through which the energies of the Warp can seep unassisted, but also on localised space-time. A recent expedition into the largest discovered cave system deep below the surface of the planet has accessed the largest and most unusual structure to date. Haarlock himself is reported to have completed the last stage of this descent accompanied only by his trusted Navigator Hilar-Set Nostromo.

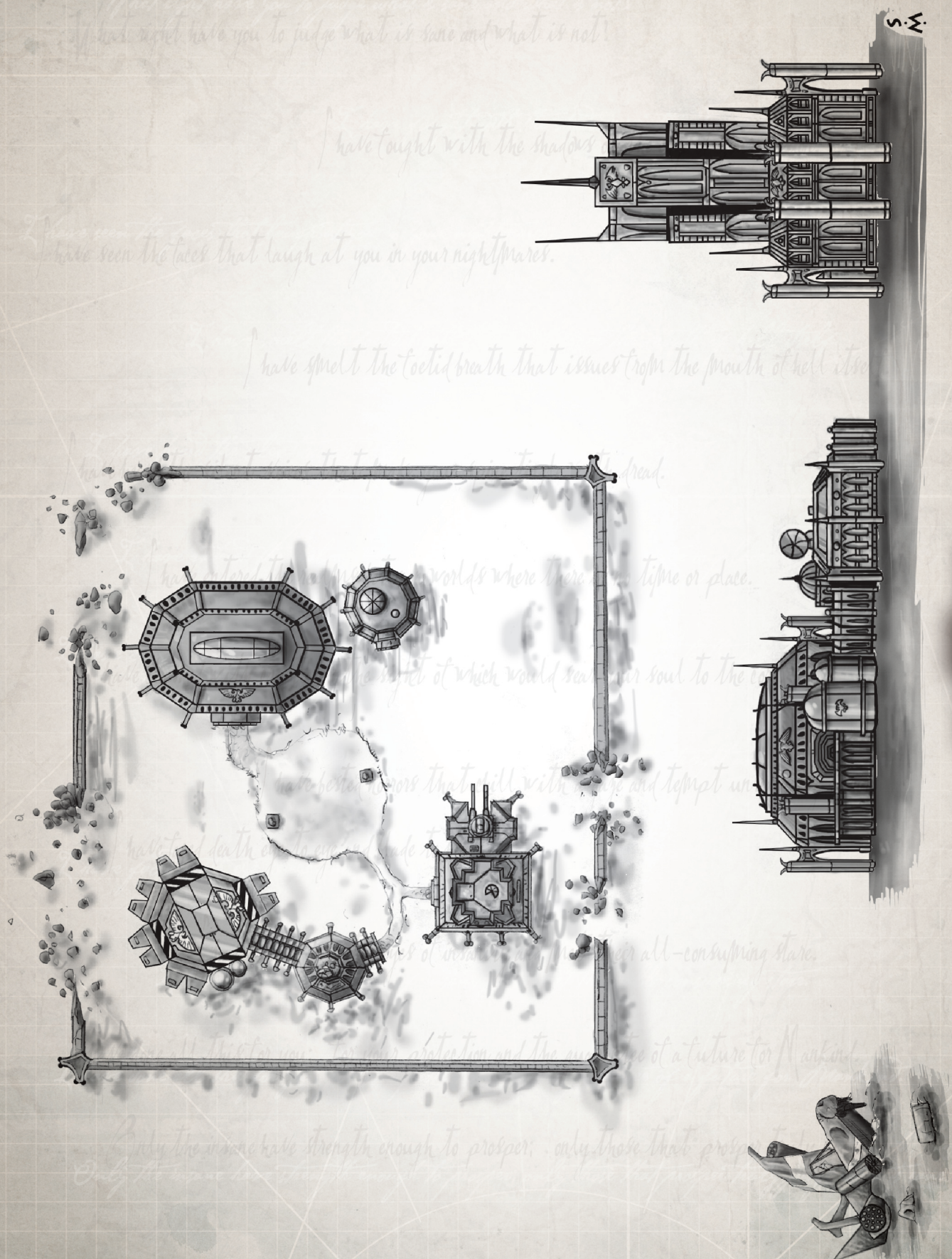
On his return, Haarlock seemed very shaken by his experiences (which, given his character, is an extremely noteworthy event) and the navigator Nostromo was violently distressed as if overcome by fear. Both talked to Haarlock's secret inner circle of seeing the threshold of a 'twisted labyrinth of possibility'; a 'Blind Tesseract' as it was put by Nostromo, although other details I have been unable to ascertain. Haarlock committed his observations, and those of Nostromo, to his personal ciphered journals in one of his encrypted 'Grey Psalters' and banned all talk of the structures beneath the planet before ordering an immediate full withdrawal from the system. As a final note, it is worth mentioning that the name Haarlock has given to the new system in his charts is 'Mara,' originating in this case from one of the ancient Terran root-tongues of which he is so fond, meaning I believe, 'hell' or 'daemon' or 'an evil dream'....

++**Note**++ Inquisitor Ark Ashtyn's analysis of incident reports from the Reality Incursion of 743.M41 links the epicentre of the disturbances to an area of new expansion in the station's genetoria complex sub-levels. The area of the plateau they occupy may well tally with Haarlock's discoveries millennia before++

+++END OF SEALED RECORD ADDENDUM+++



MAP I: THE MARA COMPLEX (SURFACE)



MAP II: THE MARA COMPLEX (BELOW GROUND)



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