







THE ACHERON CREED

First there was Rebus, and he saw that life was not good. The Demiurge had infested the cadaver of the Earth, spewing his acrid bile forth into the air, unleashing hellish torments and vile sins to seep into the minds of the faithful. The divine Pneuma had been riddled with the foulest stains and the blackest grime. But Rebus was wise. He foresaw the coming of those who carried ancient lies on their tongues; like serpents clad in man's cloth, they'd slither into the hearts of the righteous, releasing their venom. When he turned East, he saw the rise of a new people, gripped by a fool's paradise and twisted in wretched ideology. They were enemies, part of a cosmic machination that served only doom and narrowed the path toward the Final Battle.

Rebus would not yield in the face of such evil. He would oppose, and he would smite, and his fist would be clenched, and his sword would be sharp, and his mind would be unbroken. He would find those amongst his host who were born to protect their brethren from such threats, who had the power and knowledge to pierce the fog of deceit with a mere glimpse, and he would bathe them in the Black Rivers, and he'd introduce them to the arcane findings, hidden in the catacombs beneath the Cathedral: the scriptures and records of the heretical Chroniclers. And these students of Rebus would be unseen, and live in the shadows, without names, without a past. They would be angels of vengeance and retribution, and they would be the last light shining in the darkest night.

They were his Acherons.

THE YEARS AFTER

Rebus passed. But his Acherons continued their holy mission. With their senses keen, they hunted those who tried to infiltrate the Broken Cross, annihilating its most terrifying foes, striking them down with the Word of God. The Creed existed behind veils of secrecy, hidden in plain sight, disguised by obscure codes of conduct and passwords known only to the Counselors and the Baptists. In times of great need they would unleash Rebus' host and continue their cleanse of the forces that attempted to harm the Anabaptists' rise to power. These were the glory days of the Cult, until they suddenly ended. The Acherons disappeared and their legacy was forgotten. What caused the demise of the Creed is lost to history. Only the ancient scriptures sealed off in the Emanatorium of Cathedral City, held under the tight regime of the Council of Emanations, could possibly shed light on the nature of their downfall.



BORN ANEW

The 26th century rolled in; a new era had come upon the world. The Demiurge did not falter. He fanned out into a myriad of unholy minions, spreading his seed across the fallen Garden of Eden. Psychonauts and unthinkable horrors blighted the land, and heathen armies like the Jehammedans had proliferated to swallow swathes of territory which the Broken Cross had already claimed for itself. It was a dire time, and bloodshed followed bloodshed. Aries, the ram-headed abomination of the Jehammedans, had entered the fray just years prior and unleashed his twisted warriors, the Arianoi, across the Adriatic Basin, turning the tide in favor of the goat worshippers. Cathedral City struggled. But Cathedral City did not wane.

Young Nuntius had only just ascended as one of the Eight Baptists when he forced his will upon the Council. They were to open the locked gates to the Emanatorium and reveal Rebus' recorded visions to him. Nuntius was zealous, soaking up line after line, delving into the Founder's manifesto in search of answers. He came across occult formulae and teachings, unspeakable wisdom which had been buried by the dust of ages, and long forgotten methods of implanting righteous dogma into a fertile mind. Where did this secret knowledge come from? All pointed back to the center of Eden, the source of the Rivers of Paradise: the forbidden city of Noret.

THE BLACK ABBEY

Nuntius immediately went to work. He ordered his personal staff to relocate to a mountainous region close to Perugia, in Purgare. At the peak of Mount Cimone he laid claim to the Black Abbey, a desolate fortress erected by the Anabaptist missionaries in the area a century prior. This is where he would revive the Acheron Creed in Rebus' original glory, far from the prying eyes of the Council and the interference of the other Baptists. His plans were as noble as they were grandiose. If the Acherons were once created as the last line of defense against the encroaching power of the Demiurge, then this exact moment in time demanded their reemergence. But Nuntius' knowledge was incomplete. He had to reverse engineer the original formulae, and fill in the blanks with his own findings. He couldn't simply copy what Rebus had left behind, for there were too

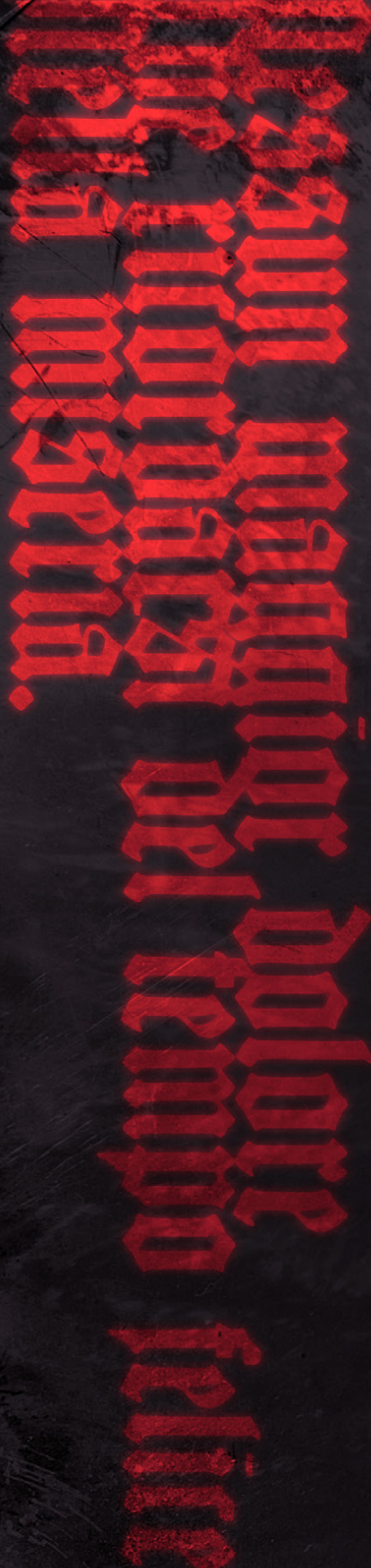
many fragments missing from the greater whole.

The outcome of Nuntius' experiment was the creation of a hidden army; hyper loyal assassins with no moral qualms and who recognized no limits on their jurisdiction – merciless soldiers who could be deployed against anyone who stood in the way of the Broken Cross: Fragments, Arianoi, Sleepers, and even other Baptists, although no one dared to say that out loud.

The Acherons would refuse to give up their missions until the objective was completed – like humanoid cruise missiles locked onto their targets and ready to detonate in lethal conflagrations. They would waltz alongside the Demiurge and let him hold sway over their mortal shells, and it would be this penultimate experience at the brink of sanity that would give them an edge over their opponents, resorting to terrorism, atrocities, and terminal destruction, all for the greater good. Nuntius had found his solution; all that was left was to restart the program.

The first batch of prospective Acherons were selected in the spring of 2549. Not just any candidate would do, however. In order to properly craft the most brutal, cunning, and ruthless individuals, willing to forgo all established rules of engagement to succeed in their task, Nuntius and his covert sect would need to fully mold the warrior from birth, choosing children just old enough to walk – primed and ready for education and training. The entirety of this early generation were kidnapped or taken in secret from rural families across Purgare, the silence of their parents bought with coin, promises that they would go on to do great things, or simply with the sharpened tip of a dagger. The deeds carried out to acquire the potential Acherons would pale in comparison to the barbarity later committed in exchange for victory.

Only a handful of Acherons survived the gruelling regimen in the Black Abbey long enough to finally be chosen for field duty. These elite agents, mentally fortified and conditioned to the absolute peak of human capability, were designed to go toe-to-toe with the supernatural powers of the Arianoi. Others were sent to remote lands, to act as the hands of revenge wherever and whenever Cathedral City required it. A last entourage was kept to join Nuntius in his future crusade toward Nox...



THE RENEGADE

Zeno was raised and trained to be cast forth as a cruel agent of retaliation acting far behind enemy lines. As one of the first successful progenies of Nuntius' Acheron Creed, he entered the stage in a time when the Anabaptists required merciless avengers that could emerge deep within Jehammedan occupied territory and fulfill their divine purpose: kill one for one, always delivering payback to the enemy on equal terms. It was the climax of the Adriatic Wars, and the mighty river of the Adria ran red with the blood of Neognostic and goat-herder alike. There was an urgent need for a man like him. Silent. Unscrupulous. Inhumane.

A terrorist without guilt, Zeno wallowed in the destruction of the enemy. On his nefarious missions, he studied the Jehammedans, and became one with their heathen ways. He learned how to soil what was holy to them, indulging in the carnality of war and assassination, leaving only death in his wake. It was during these crimson colored days of rage and fury that Zeno became addicted to drinking the blood of those he had slain. Swords of Jehammed, then Isaaki, and finally the sacred blood of the Iconides and Oracles that fell by his sword. A sadistic ritual at first, committed to appease the growing void in his heart, it soon became his modus operandi, garnering him many spiteful names among the Jehammedan ranks, like "Blood Drinker" and "Blackheart", in their attempt to describe the unthinkable doom that had befallen their people.

Zeno's streak of murder and havoc lasted until he made a fateful mistake and slew an Arianoi in battle. In the heat of victory, he tore out the heart of his adversary and ate his remains, gorging on the mystical fluids of his fallen prey, and opening the door for Aries to enter his bloodstream. Unlike the groomed line of Jehammedans chosen to drink Aries' silver milk and become his henchmen, the Acheron's body wasn't metematically primed to handle the Marauder's essence swirling through his veins. Particles of Aries' own memory were suddenly mixed with Zeno's own thoughts, while foreign impulses, delusions of grandeur, and crystal clear emanations ravaged his mind, opening pathways to unattainable knowledge, spun out like a fractal spider web of opportunity before his waking eye. All it took was one lick from the sap of the ram-headed Marauder to fall prey to his endless allure.

PEACE AT LAST

In 2591 the Baptist Altair brokered a peace deal with the Jehammedan leadership, and the Adriatic Wars came to an abrupt end. The Council of Emanations was caught unprepared by the backroom agreement and was faced with the final points that were negotiated upon and anchored in the memorandum: all hostile activities conducted by secret operatives of the Broken Cross east of the Adria were to cease immediately. The Acherons still alive and out on field duty were to be ordered to retreat and report back to Cathedral City. Moreso, Altair decreed that a reevaluation of the Acherons was to be conducted by the Council itself. Its aim would be to determine if Nuntius would continue to hold sway over the covert order, or if the Creed required reformation in light of the actions undertaken during the war. Altair proposed allowing only Sublimes to be introduced into Rebus' ancient teachings, as only they would have both the moral fortitude and life experience required to not succumb to their most heinous urges.

While the conflict between the Baptists and the Council brewed in the Octumvirate, Zeno himself received the dictum that his operation was officially disbanded. The Acheron, who had spent over two decades in service of the Broken Cross, wading through guts and corpse fields, raping and pillaging, was commanded to simply bury the hatchet, forget his mission, and follow the call back home. Zeno couldn't believe his ears. In recent years he had recruited his own pack of warriors around him,

faithful extremists who served as loyal comrades during the ongoing conflict. They called themselves the Rotten Few, and war was all they had ever known. Peace was not an option.

VANISHED

Zeno and his private army went rogue. In the hinterlands they perpetuated their hatred, killing Jehammedans, hunting Arianoi, and acting as unhinged vessels of reckoning until their cover was blown. Zeno's pack became public knowledge and the Council of Emanations, pressured to stick to their side of the peace accords, had to respond, disavowing the Rotten Few and placing a ransom on Zeno's head both east and west of the Adria.

Overnight, the Rotten Few had lost all support within their own Cult, betrayed by those they had sworn to protect. Now they were outlaws, convicted for crimes which had been ordered from above. In a last ditch effort the Rotten Few retreated back into Purgare and sought protection from the Rust Falcons in the Flock's impassable hideout in the Dolomites. Here they would bide their time. Years of obscurity followed, until nobody could tell if Zeno or any of the Rotten Few even still existed – rumors of their death were becoming commonplace.

However, in exile, Zeno's craving for Arianoi blood did not subside. With the aid of the Rust Falcons he gorged on Glory and countless more mundane substances as a substitute, but nothing created a similar effect to Aries' silver milk. He yearned for more. It was an obsession.

Then he found a trail. After word emerged of a catastrophe that had befallen the town of Lucatore, Zeno learned of a group of Arianoi called the Horned Nine allegedly acting out of Venice. Together with his pack he lured one of Aries' personal henchmen into a deathtrap; as the silver blood of Zeno's prey spilled down his gullet he gained access to the Marauder's most potent incarnation yet. However, the Acheron's blasphemous act also connected him to the other Horned Ones that were still operating in the open, unseen. One of them, Naraka, was about to reach the faraway city of Justitian, and Zeno knew exactly where his destiny would lead him next.

IN MEDIA RES

The Acheron's strategy doesn't unfold as planned. The arrival of the Rotten Few in the Cross Quarter is far from subtle. When the Furors are spotted in public, hapless Anabaptists proceed to cheer their old war veterans like heroes, leading to Zeno being exposed amidst the crowd gathering on Banding Hill. It doesn't take long for a handful of hot-headed Orgiastics to sense their moment of glory, remembering that the Rotten Few are at the top of

Cathedral City's Most Wanted list. Before anyone knows what is happening, a riotous brawl erupts in the Cross Quarter, drawing in bystanders and innocents alike. Zeno is split off from his pack and cornered. As tensions break out across Justitian proper, the Judges respond immediately, intervening before the situation escalates. It doesn't take much for them to deduce the identity of the man that has fallen into their hands by sheer accident.

In one fell swoop, Zeno is captured and abducted to the Cleft while Rutgar's Protectors swarm out to clean up all traces of the raw incident. Nobody is to speak about what went down on Banding Hill. Zeno is a high value prisoner, the likes of which can be used to gain leverage against Cathedral City and to be exchanged for another high value asset who resides in the clutches of the Broken Cross, Rutgar's personal archenemy: Kargonogh.

In the meantime, Rutgar cannot have Zeno's true identity broadcast. Conducting the prisoner exchange in Justitian is unsafe, risking exposure by the Chroniclers. Instead, the operation must be conducted offsite in Ignatz, where Rutgar's Black Judges control the turf. To ensure the prisoner remains faceless until the handover is complete, the Steel Masters are tasked with creating a mask to hide Zeno's features from the Cluster's all-seeing eye.

However, just as Zeno sensed the aspect of Aries residing within the city limits, Naraka has picked up the interference caused by Zeno's appearance in Justitian. The Blood of Aries wants retribution and the House of War trembles from his call for revenge. Naraka tasks his most dutiful Swords to bring Zeno to him. Alive. Aries will reclaim what once was his own flesh and blood.

COUNTDOWN

Zeno's pack escaped during the purge of the Cross Quarter. The Rotten Few refuse to let their commander be delivered to his death sentence. They will break him out, at any cost. In the week before Zeno's transfer, the Rotten Few are contacted by the Acheron's prison guard who informs the Anabaptists of the upcoming operation – and their leader's destination. The Rotten Few have all the time in the world to plan their counterattack and free Zeno before he can be handed to the callous wolves of Cathedral City. They've all been sold out for what they once stood for. Now they retaliate.

In the Driftwood, the smuggling den of the Guest Quarter, the pack stacks up on black market supplies, Psychonautic remains, weapons, and ammo, using their time advantage to lay out a series of traps on the way to Ignatz along with devising an escape plan on where to go once Zeno has been liberated.

Clock's ticking



ZENO BLACKHEART

In his dreams, the charred walls of the Black Abbey amplify the harrowing echoes rampaging through his brain. A door at the end of the hallway opens, red light flooding into the corridor. Zeno steps into the room. Before him lies the pulsating cadaver of a flayed lamb, heaving, steaming, its scarlet blood turning into torrents of ecstasy as the tide washes over the Acheron, pours down his throat, and accelerates the drumming within his chest. Something foreign has entered his mind, struggles to take control of him, break him, but Zeno can resist the alien orders, wrestle them back into the dark cage of his subconsciousness where he rules supreme over his own nightmares.

But the visions remain. Numbers intertwined, places he's never set foot in but knows by heart, distances racing by, time, space, interconnected relationships, memories and pathways, constellations and global conflagrations, they're all part of his own mental firmament. Zeno cannot comprehend it all, too complex are the patterns, too fleeting the emanations. He must capture the images and riddles on his body with ink, tattoos that will serve as a guide for what the Beast within attempts to reveal to him. And Zeno knows how to dig deeper. It's the blood, the sanguine fluid which he drains from fallen Arianoi, that allows him to expand the Elysian Fields before his inner eye, to grasp the vastness of the cosmic truth that will lead him to ascension.

Rebus is calling him from the depths of oblivion, for Zeno is the messiah born anew, the undisputed incarnation of the vessel of Pneuma created to lead the Anabaptists toward the Final Battle. Destiny, laid out since birth, fate, to be followed unto death. The mortal plane is nothing but a garment of the Demiurge, and the Council has failed to understand Rebus' true lesson. The quest for the Rivers of Paradise is not a physical journey through the skinfolds of the Great Deceiver, but a spiritual one, attainable only by those who allow the silver milk to pass through their veins – those who dare to take the last step of becoming closer to what they fear the most...

ROLE PLAY

The Acheron is a hulking fiend, intimidating through his foreboding appearance alone. His voice is the polar opposite, soothing, caring, demanding yet comforting. But these are just superficial aspects of a zealous murderer who has extinguished fear from his soul, and to whom the concept of mercy is merely a distant star travelling the farthest reaches of the night sky. Everything materialistic is ultimately rotten – and Zeno embraces every part of it.

PROFILE

ARCHETYPE: Purgare, The Zealot, Anabaptist, Rank 5: Acheron

ATTRIBUTES: BOD:6 AGI:3 CHA:4 INT:3 PSY:5 INS:4

SKILLS: Athletics 8D, Brawl 9D, Force 9D, Melee 10D, Stamina 8D, Toughness 9D, Dexterity 7D, Navigation 5D, Mobility 4D, Projectiles 6D, Stealth 6D, Arts 6D, Conduct 7D, Expression 8D, Leadership 8D, Negotiation 6D, Seduction 7D, Legends 9D, Cunning 8D, Domination 11D, Faith 8D, Reaction 8D, Empathy 7D, Orienteering 6D, Perception 8D, Primal 10D, Survival 6D, Taming 7D

BACKGROUNDS: Allies 3, Network 3, Renown 5, Secrets 6

SPECIAL: Nanite Mismatch: The silver milk of Aries which Zeno consumed is not correctly configured to his body, but it remains intensely potent. Zeno regenerates (1) Flesh Wound every 30 minutes.

POTENTIALS: Memetic Teachings 3 (Hush, Dictate, Blackout), Panopticon 2, Zealot 3, Black River 2, Unleashed 2, Unyielding 1

INITIATIVE: 7D / 20 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Fists, Brawl 11D, Distance 1m, Dazed (3), Smooth Running (2T)

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Parry), Melee 6D; Ranged Combat active, Mobility 5D; Mental, Faith 7D

MOVEMENT: 8m

ARMOR: Prisoner's rags, Armor 0

CONDITION: Spore Infestation 14/16 (5 permanent), Flesh Wounds 18, Trauma 11

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: Specially crafted Steel Master headpiece

THE MASK

The mask strapped to Zeno's face serves several key purposes for the Judges. First, it obscures the prisoner's identity, preventing him from being picked up on automated Cluster scans, and even hindering more manual investigations. Second, the small explosive payload mounted at the back of the skull, coupled with the clockwork timing mechanism which can only be defused with a paired key, ensures that the Anabaptists don't renege on the deal, and that Zeno doesn't try to tamper with the device himself. Third, the cramped space restricts the movement of the Acheron's mouth, ensuring that his attempts to spew memetically laced diatribes are limited at best.

GOD'S CANVAS

Each emanation that rocks Zeno's mind is a bolt of divine insight – but its lessons are fleeting. Similarly, the few fragments of ancient knowledge that leak into the Acheron's own thoughts are hard to properly visualise and harder to remember long term. As such, Zeno has taken to tattooing the symbological representations of their teachings on his body. Even if he was dragged back to Severinus and had his tongue torn out by the Sisters of Grace, his body would be enough to deduce his message, and chart a path through the murky secrets coating the world to find out the truth.

THE ROTTEN FEW

They've witnessed the miracles performed by Zeno with their own eyes. Wounds that would kill other mortals healed within the blink of an eye, and the emanations spoken by his tongue carried fundamental truths, foreseeing events long before they would happen. There is no question that their leader is a reborn vessel of Rebus, a physical manifestation of the true path of the Pneuma, a messiah, destined to reach the very top of the Cult and take on the mantle as one of the Eight Baptists in Cathedral City.

But the Rotten Few have seen through the vile actions of the Broken Cross' leadership, as the pack fell from grace in the eyes of those who fear Zeno's inborn powers and omniscience, those who'd rather have him hanged than let him endanger their throne of lies. Over the past twelve years these men and women have fought at Zeno's side, absorbed his teachings, and followed in his footsteps. They are his most devout disciples, and each of them would freely give their life to save their leader. The six of them, Carlsbad, Vittorio, Lipah, Essex, Hera, and Fjord, are all that is left of a pack that was once two dozen warriors strong; but they are Zeno's best. Their former pillars of faith have been shattered and remade as they've transformed into willful supporters of the Acheron's cause. Where he goes, they go, when he demands sacrifice, they draw their blades, and if he asks them to die, they must die, all in order for Zeno to ascend to his rightful place.

THE GREAT ESCAPE

The Rotten Few are ready. They received a message from their leader informing them of his destination, wrapped up in memetic protocols implanted in the mind of his prison guard. A leak. Useful. At first, they scout out the surrounding road network leading to Ignatz itself where they mark the proper places to strike, and draw old allies into the fold who owe them a favor or two: Selanis, the street whore, and her Flock of Roadside Sirens, as well as Fogger, a Lone Wolf who runs his business out in the Velka Ruins. The last unplayed ace is Orek the Pious, an undercover Acheron and former comrade of Zeno's, hiding out in Ferropol and offering asylum to the Rotten Few after their successful escape.

They were not swayed by the decoy transports disappearing off to locations elsewhere in the Protectorate, trusting in the information from their leader. Setting out ahead of time gives the Rotten Few a headstart on Vexicall and allows them to set an ambush at Lake Fall, close to the end of the transport's journey. This is crucial. The farther away from Justitian, the slimmer the chances of Judicial backup. They must go all-in on the tight window of opportunity and use surprise to their advantage.

In the event that Vexicall himself is a decoy, they must quickly rearrange their plan to flip the cards. Stripping the fallen Judges of their equipment and uniforms, the Rotten Few will enter Ignatz in the guise of Vexicall's entourage, driving the seized carriage right up to the heart of the town, from where they can launch a lethal



strike on the meeting. To do so, they must create chaos by freeing the convicts and instigating a revolt against the Judge prison guards. In the ensuing turmoil, they will attempt to take hostages of the highest ranking individuals present, which they will use in an exchange to bail out the Acheron. Once they have Zeno they will retreat back to the fortified courthouse in the center of Ignatz. It's a risky play, but the Rotten Few won't shy away from executing their prisoners if their demands aren't met. They're too far in the hinterlands of the Protectorate to expect a sudden siege of the courthouse. Ignatz is a backwater town, right?

If possible, they will try to snatch Zeno's counterpart prisoner for additional leverage during their withdrawal from the courthouse. That's where things get tricky. Carlsbad, the pack's Commander in Chief, has made out a path across the Southern Highlands east of Ignatz to divert any pursuers.

Step one begins by heading south, escaping past the Sunken Meadows and breaking out toward the Velka Ruins where Fogger has placed a cache of equipment for them, including a heavy fistful of Drafts, spare ammo, and whatever artifacts he's managed to scrounge up. In addition, he brought the tools to strip Zeno of his mask, giving the Acheron his freedom back. If the pack should successfully arrive at the Velka Ruins by horse or by carriage, Fogger has been instructed to shy the mounts away to the southeast, leaving a false trail for anyone who manages to track them up to this point.

Step two demands that the Rotten Few make it over to Thaw Point, an abandoned Provider weather station that fell out of use some three decades ago. Lipah has already prepared the ramshackle hideout and stashed a slew of Ascetic robes, coats, and other disguises there. This is where the Rotten Few will change their outfits and disband, with each of the seven members taking an alternate route towards Ferropol, where they are supposed to meet again in two days time.

Meanwhile, in Ferropol, Orek has made all necessary preparations to admit his fellow Acheron and the Rotten Few into his fortified outpost Everlast. From there, hidden

amongst the Ascetics, they can plan out every following step of their great revenge until the heat around them has died down.

FINAL GOALS

Three milestones remain for the Acheron and his Rotten Few to finish their goals. Naraka, the Blood of Aries that has occupied Zeno's mind, must be located and lured out of his nest so he can be slaughtered to serve as sustenance. His blood is so potent that Zeno plans on sharing it with his faithful circle, initiating them to his own visions, thereby turning his Rotten Few into even more powerful allies for the next step: Cathedral City.

The Baptist responsible for the Acheron Creed must die at the hands of his former student. He will not be forgiven for the way Zeno's holy mission was dismantled, the way that the glory of the Acheron's deeds was fed to the altar of 'peace', serving as a footnote in history to appease a heathen nemesis in league with the Demiurge; a betrayal so great it can never be healed. Nuntius has abandoned his own creation, therefore he must be brought to justice. The Baptists have shown nothing but weakness, but if Zeno can make it before the Council of Emanations and declare the visions that have haunted him for years there will be no choice but to grant him absolution and coronate him as Baptist.

For all of this to unfold as planned, the Rotten Few will require money: Drafts that will allow them to hire additional mercenaries and equipment, or to pay off the guards and spies that will work alongside the pack to breach into the inner sanctum of Cathedral City and challenge the Broken Cross. This is a large-scale operation, and one that can only be successful if all the dice fall into place. If the Rotten Few manage to seize Kargonogh and escape with the wanted Reformist, they will have exactly what they need to extract large sums of ransom cash from the Judiciary. How they will arrange a proper transaction is left to be determined, but what matters the most is that they have the means to extort favors from the Judges. All that's left to do is put their plans into motion.

CARLSBAD

The Commander in Chief of the Rotten Few in Zeno's absence, Carlsbad was the very first to band together with the Acheron in the Adriatic. The brooding and solemn operative has held on through thick-and-thin, holding close to his leader's side as they fought through the most dire of circumstances, and is loyal beyond every shadow of a doubt. After enduring the Judge operation and emerging unscathed, he scrambled the rest of the pack and prepared to mount a rescue, tracking down a group of Orgiastics in the Cross Quarter who had recently returned from Hybris-pania. From them, he acquired a pair of Eyes of Destiny, one to be used as a Warplense, the other to gain an edge in desperate situations, just like this one.

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 8D/16 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Battle Axe, Melee 9D, Distance 1m, Damage 10, Impact (IT);

Pistol, Projectiles 5D, Distance 10/40m, Damage 9, Mag. 6

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Parry), Melee 8D;

Ranged Combat active, Mobility 8D, Mental (Faith) 10D

SPECIAL: CHA+Leadership 8D, BOD+Stamina 9D, Killing Joke 3, Destiny's Gaze: +3D to all Actions related to freeing Zeno in the showdown at Ignatz, from consuming the Eye of Destiny; 3x Glory cusps for use in battle

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Anabaptist battle armor, Armor 4

CONDITION: 16 (Trauma: 8)

VITTORIO

Often, those who observe the Rotten Few in battle come away with the impression that the pack has five remaining members. That's only because Vittorio didn't even consider them worth looking at, for if he did they'd have seen the telltale glint of his custom-made black powder rifle's scope peeking out from a hideaway almost a hundred meters away as he surveys the battlefield. The Furor is the tactical heart of the pack, quietly discerning enemy weak-points, developing infiltration stratagems, and picking off high value targets with unparalleled precision while his comrades rush into the fray. He rarely speaks unless the information is critical – his rifle does more than enough talking in combat.

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 4D/16 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Black Powder Rifle, Projectiles 9D, Distance 50/300, Damage 11, Mag. 1, Sensitive

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Parry), Melee 3D;

Ranged Combat active, Mobility 4D,

Mental (Willpower) 7D

SPECIAL: PSY+Cunning 8D, INS+Perception 9D,

AGI+Stealth 7D, INT+Science 6D, Hawkeye 3

MOVEMENT: 4m

ARMOR: Camouflage gear, Armor 0, Camo (3)

CONDITION: 8 (Trauma: 5)

LIPAH

Nowhere is safe for the enemies of the Rotten Few; across the long period of active operation the pack garnered a reputation for slaughtering key Jhammedan figures without mercy, leading those who suspected that they were targets to hole up in fortresses or war camps, never even approaching the front lines. It didn't help one iota. Lipah is a master of disguise and stealth, able to alter her appearance and mannerisms to create the illusion of almost any persona. She creeps through the night, coated with Argus-infused Elysian Oils in order to predict the sight lines of guards, or exploiting her athleticism to reach locations thought unreachable. The murderous assassin is uncharacteristically cheerful and vibrant when off-duty, making up for the razor-sharp focus she maintains when stalking her targets.

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 7D/18 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Throatlitter, Melee 7D, Distance 1m, Damage 4, Smooth Running (2T), +2T to successful sneak attacks;

Sword, Melee 5D, Distance 1m, Damage 7

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Dodge), Mobility 8D;

Ranged Combat active, Mobility 8D, Mental (Faith) 6D

SPECIAL: AGI+Stealth 11D, AGI+Dexterity 9D,

PSY+Deception 8D, BOD+Stamina 7D,

Sleek 2, Ambidextrous 2

MOVEMENT: 10m

ARMOR: Leather bodysuit, Armor 1

CONDITION: 10 (Trauma: 6)

ESSEX

Two parts niter, one part concentrated sulfuric acid, combine with glycerin, additional sodium bicarbonate, mix with crushed diatomite, package into blasting tube, repeat. Essex is an explosives expert, using the knowledge gained as an Elysian for far more nefarious purposes. Contrary to her comrades, the woman is fairly squeamish and dislikes observing the results of her creations – even prone to fainting at the sight of the gore left in the wake of an explosion. Therefore, instead of wading into the blood-soaked mess of direct combat, she provides the rest of her pack with weapons of destruction: bombs, shrapnel grenades, and high explosive charges intended to be used to wreak havoc in the massed ranks of charging Jehammedan Swords. They'll be just as lethal on small squads.

HERA

Just one kiss, or a single pinprick as she passes, is enough to signal the end of a life. Hera is a Furor, and the toxician of the Rotten Few, creating oils to coat their weapons from an untold array of recipes stored in her mind. In combat she revels in unabashed bloodshed, rushing into the fray, exulting in the adrenaline rush and amped up on Spitalian adrenaline stimulants and self-mixed Elysian Oils derived from the legendary Lucatore batch, wielding a light blade that delivers death to anyone she cuts. When the fighting stops, and her high passes, she falls back into the arms of Zeno, her lover. Those are the only two places she feels truly alive.

FJORD

Infiltrators, snipers, explosives experts, poisoners, they're all well and good when their niche is needed, sure. But there's always an opening for some really big guns cutting down dozens of Swords per shot, or a brutally heavy sword carving through a forest of spears. Fjord doesn't speak much, preferring to simply wait until Zeno, his sparring partner, directs him towards a target, but he still manages to get his point across with a double-barreled Spitfire assembled by Essex. When its fuel tank sputters and runs dry, it's quickly discarded in favor of the halberd strapped to his back. The Furor rarely needs more than one momentous swing to cleave a man in two. If the first isn't enough, though, the next three will be – he never gives up.

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 3D/16 Ego Points (Focus)

ATTACK: Infection Bomb, Projectiles 4D, Distance 10/20, Damage 3, Cloud (4m), Deviation, Fire Hazardous, Special (Infects open wounds with Black Water);

Shrapnel Grenade, Projectiles 4D, Distance 10/40m, Damage 10, Thunder Strike, Deviation, Explosive, Gruesome (4)

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Parry), Melee 4D; Ranged Combat active, Mobility 5D, Mental (Faith) 8D

SPECIAL: INT+Science 10D, INT+Legends 10D, INT+Engineering 9D, AGI+Crafting 7D,

Brainwave 2, Number Cruncher 1

MOVEMENT: 3m

ARMOR: Thick safety gear, Armor 1, Insulated

CONDITION: 8 (Trauma: 4)

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 8D/16 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Shortsword with Poison Channel, Melee 7D, Distance 1m, Damage 7, Smooth Running (3T), Poisoned (4C, -1 Trauma, Potency -1 per Round)

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Parry), Melee 7D (9D with oils); Ranged Combat active, Mobility 8D, Mental (Willpower) 8D

SPECIAL: INT+Medicine 8D, INT+Science 9D, CHA+Seduction 8D, AGI+Dexterity 8D, Unleashed 2; Self-brewed oils based on Glory add (+2) to the BOD Attribute for (4) hours, (+6) spore infestation per use

MOVEMENT: 7m

ARMOR: Light leather wrappings, Armor 1

CONDITION: 16 (Trauma: 7)

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 6D/12 Ego Points (Primal)

ATTACK: Double-Barreled Spitfire, Projectiles 5D, Distance 3/10, Damage 12, Mag. 8, Fire Hazardous, Double Barreled, Special (Pressurized tank explosion);

Balanced Halberd, Melee 8D, Distance 2m, Damage 13, Impact (2T),

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Parry), Melee 8D; Ranged Combat active, Mobility 6D, Mental (Faith) 7D

SPECIAL: PSY+Domination 10D, South of Eden 2, Fisherman's Blood, Pneuma 2

MOVEMENT: 8m

ARMOR: Steel armor and leather wrappings, Armor 5

CONDITION: 22 (Trauma: 10)



OPPOSING FORCES

Zeno's name is renowned throughout Europe due to his actions in the Adriatic Basin, and the operation to have him transferred, first to Ignatz then to Severinus, draws attention from all across the political landscape of the Protectorate and beyond. Presented below are the key players in the operation, and their motivations for getting involved.

THE JUDGES

The Judiciary is the lucky winner in the turn of events. They have snatched Zeno away from all the powers that want his head, without having any stake in the game. To them, he is simply a high value prisoner that they can use to further their own designs. To ensure his safe transfer however, the Judiciary must set up a series of false leads and decoys, with the Judges playing a game of hide and seek, trying to mislead the Chroniclers. Their initial plans are entirely focused on the Cluster and its operatives – who else would want to get in the way of the transfer?

THE ANABAPTISTS

They want Zeno back in their clutches and silenced. With his cover blown the dust cloud he drags behind him is too tall. If he would fall into the hands of the enemy, he could be tortured and release information that the Broken Cross would never want to allow to become public. This makes him a threat to the integrity of the Cult. Better to lock him up in Severinus and quietly forget about him than risk any competing power to get their hands on his knowledge.

THE JEHAMMEDANS

Naraka, the Herald of Aries, along with the House of War call for retribution. The Jehammedans want to get their hands on Zeno and bring him to justice by capturing the Acheron and taking him to Crete where the Fatum can extract the parts of Aries stolen by Zeno, and potentially reassemble the Horned One that was slaughtered by his hand.

While the fire of revenge burns bright within Naraka and the other surviving members of the Horned Nine, the Herald is not foolish enough to engage in open confrontation with the Acheron. Even with Zeno restrained, beaten down, and weakened, he is a perilous opponent. Instead, Naraka guides his Swords from a distance using Bhuta, his drone, and will retreat if Zeno escapes. Only when he has possession of Jehammed's Will can he be confident in a direct engagement.

THE CHRONICLERS

The Chroniclers mustn't know of Zeno, for they would move heaven and earth to interrogate the prisoner on the Acheron Creed and drag any speck of dirt out of his twisted mind that would help them understand the inner workings of the upper echelons of Cathedral City better, thereby stripping Rutgar of his political leverage.

UNFORESEEN COMPLICATIONS

The Rotten Few have scouted out as much of the situation as possible with the limited time and resources available to them, but there's far more going on behind the scenes than even they know. They haven't been able to account for everything.

One of the most tightly guarded secrets of Ignatz, beyond its sordid past as a nest for the Plague Birds, beyond the oppressive regime steadily hammering it into shape as an icon of Judicial perfection, is the fact that it operates as a command center for Rutgar's Black Judges. Working from a large warehouse which is fronted as a crop storage business, the hidden base stockpiles heavy weapons and surveillance equipment reclaimed from Exalt during the City Wars, and the operatives stationed here are under direct command of Iwanov, ready to be dispatched at a moments notice. During the chaos of the Rotten Few attempting to free their leader, the five agents will scramble to retaliate against the terrorist pack laying waste to their town centre, and follow them if they manage to storm out of Ignatz. Their immediate order will be to secure Kargonogh at all costs, but they will not hesitate to bring down Zeno and his followers along the way.

Adding to the dangers arrayed against the Rotten Few, the delegation from Cathedral City is armed and deadly. Consisting of an elite pack of eight Furors known as the Bulwarks, experienced from many conflicts in their own right, the Anabaptist cohort are staunch loyalists to the Neognosis and are led by the Emissary Adelstorm, a renowned figure within the Anabaptist ranks. They are on a mission to drag Zeno back to the Council of Emanations so he can be put on trial for going rogue, before he is sealed in an isolated cell in the prison city of Severinus, never to see the light of day again. No parole. In exchange for the Acheron, they have brought Kargonogh as a bargaining chip, but they care little for the Reformist's survival. Let the Judges deal with their own problems.

THIS IS PERSONAL

Rutgar's obsession with Kargonogh, the reason for so quickly giving up a valuable asset like a living Acheron, is buried in the deep past. Before Utrecht took his place, Kargonogh acted as Rutgar's best man. He was his closest confidant, and one of the architects of the Black Judge program. Rutgar didn't see the betrayal coming. Behind his back, Kargonogh planned for his Reformists to topple the Judiciary. Vela, Rutgar's former wife, came across Kargonogh's cell, but was poisoned before she could inform the Old Wolf. The deception was so well hidden, operating with such patience and stealth, that it took Rutgar almost ten years to draw the connection to her murderer and discover the rebellion that was forming within the office next door. He had the Reformists smoked out and crushed beneath the full might of the Iron Fist, but Kargonogh was a step ahead of his former mentor and had already fled Justitian.

The Anabaptists picked up the Reformist ringleader after a sympathetic Resistance member tipped them off to his location, hidden in a swampy base camp in the forests near Born. Knowing that Kargonogh represented a significant asset to be used against the Judges, the Broken Cross was quick to strike. A covert raid in the dead of night grabbed the old Executioner, who had lost all his closest confidants by now, and he was quickly shipped to Severinus, waiting for the moment he could be put to use. When the Judiciary alerted the Anabaptists of Zeno's capture, that moment finally came.

THE BLACK JUDGES

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 5D/14 Ego Points

ATTACK: Battle Rifle, Projectiles 7D, Distance 20/400m, Damage 13, Mag. 10; Shortsword, Melee 6D, Distance 1m, Damage 8, Smooth Running (3T)

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Parry), Melee 6D; Ranged Combat active, Mobility 6D, Mental 9D

SPECIAL: AGI+Stealth 7D, PSY+Cunning 8D, PSY+Deception 8D, INS+Perception 6D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Black Judge combat gear, Armor 2

CONDITION: 14 (Trauma: 5)

THE FURORS

COMBAT STATS

INITIATIVE: 5D/12 Ego Points

ATTACK: Spitfire, Projectiles 5D, Distance 3/10m, Damage 12, Mag. 15, Fire Hazardous, Special (Pressurized tank explosion); Lance, Melee 6D, Distance 3m, Damage 8, Special

DEFENSE: Passive 1; Melee active (Parry), Melee 6D; Ranged Combat active, Mobility 6D, Mental 9D

SPECIAL: CHA+Leadership 6D, PSY+Domination 7D, AGI+Navigation 5D

MOVEMENT: 6m

ARMOR: Anabaptist battle armor, Armor 3, First Impression (+2D)

CONDITION: 14 (Trauma: 5)

THEY SAID THE WAR IS OVER

