



Heavy Metal

The Obliterator Virus in Inquisitor.

By Robey Jenkins

INTRODUCTION

This article doesn't entail the use of Obliterators as they appear in Warhammer 40,000, but rather the infection and development of the virus in non-Astartes humans: a somewhat different beast; especially as it implies the possibility of Obliterator Cults infiltrating Imperial worlds and Forge Worlds.

In summary the article includes a background to the Obliterator Virus and speculation over its origins; new information on the Obliterator Virus's possible spread into the Imperium's human population; rules for becoming infected; rules and description covering the nine stages of infection; suggestions for using the Obliterator Virus in games and scenarios; suggestions on how to model the Obliterator Virus; a haunting extract from the hidden archives of Inquisitor Cleops.

THE OBLITERATOR VIRUS

The origins of the Obliterator Virus lie, without question, in the insane reaches of the region of twisted space known as the Eye of Terror. Traitors from the defeated Space Marine Legions of the Warmaster, who fled into the Eye to escape the vengeance of the Imperialist victors, will have found themselves in a weird and unpredictable environment. Even the least affected of the Eye's myriad worlds are planets of bizarre shapes and disturbing colours. At the very heart, the laws of physics become the plaything of daemons that sculpt and rebuild matter to their own bizarre rules. Worlds of tortured flesh and bone orbit stars of black light. Vast collections of tiny cages shriek the agony and terror of their occupants as moons with gaping mouths filled with teeth snap and tear at each other.

But it wasn't just on the higher levels of life that Chaos laid its mark for, whether as gift, punishment or just cruel chance, some of the traitors found themselves blighted with strange, new diseases. Mortarion's Death Guard brought their Nurgle's Rot with them and, under the tutelage of their Captain, Typhus, they came to appreciate the full spectrum of the Plague God's creations.

Fabius Bile, Chief Apothecary of the Emperor's Children, conducted endless and fascinating experiments on the effects of the Warp upon pathogens, toxins, bacteria and viruses of all sorts.

Whether the Obliterator Virus came from his laboratories, from the Plague Hives of the Death Guard or from some freak influence, it is unlikely that anyone will ever know. It seems to have touched every Legion to some extent or another based on classified reports from the battlefields of Abaddon's 13th Black Crusade. But some Legions clearly welcome its touch more than others and infectees are especially prevalent among the Iron Warriors Legion. Whether their affinity to technology makes them more susceptible in some way or whether their twisted rites actually involve the deliberate infection of Battle Brothers is unknown.

Until recently, it was thought by Imperial observers that the virus, however it was originally conveyed to infectees, could not survive outside the baleful touch of warp-infused space for long enough to present a risk of cross-infection. But the Magi Biologis

have recently documented anecdotal evidence to suggest that a mutated form of the virus has been left in the wake of the 13th Black Crusade and that it is, even now, spreading across the Imperium.

Investigations by members of the Ordo Malleus who are aware of this new threat, assisted by those in the Ordo Xenos who have an interest in and understanding of microscopic xeno-threats, suggest that there may even be Obliterator Cults, deliberately infecting themselves and others with the virus, not only on normal Imperial worlds but most worryingly on the Forge Worlds of the Adeptus Mechanicus...

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The Obliterator Virus seems to be communicated by touch and/or fluid transfer, so any character in physical contact or in close combat with an infectee has a chance of contracting the virus. This chance is equal to 1% per action spent in contact or combat, up to a maximum of 10%. So a character spending 5 actions in combat with an infectee has a 5% chance of contracting the virus. The test to see if an infection has occurred should take place in the Recovery Phase. The effects are not cumulative from turn to turn, so if the same character spent another 5 actions in combat with the infectee, he would still only have a 5% chance of contracting the virus.

The virus takes hold of its victims by stages. The length of any given stage is hugely variable, due to the semi-warp nature of the viral material and depends greatly upon whether the infectee resists or invites the infection.

If the character wishes to resist the infection, then after every game - or game week in campaigns - the character must pass a willpower test or the virus will advance by one stage.

If the character wishes to invite the infection, then the virus automatically advances by one stage after each game or game week. A character may only invite the infection if he or she is aware of it.

Note that a character who invites infection cannot then choose to resist it later: it's too late by then - his soul is already forfeit to the Chaos Gods!

Stage 1. No obvious effects, although the victim is a carrier and can infect others. It is up to the GM whether the character is aware of his condition.

Stage 2. The victim finds that weapons sit more naturally in his hands, becoming extensions of himself, helping him to aim and control firearms more effectively. He gains the skills Gunfighter and Rock Steady Aim if he does not already have them.

Stage 3. The victim finds himself starting to physically merge with weapons if he holds them for long enough. More disturbingly, he starts to generate ammunition. The character always counts as having reloads for las, blackpowder and bolt ammunition (but not for special types of ammo) and counts as having the skill Quickload. In addition, he will now be aware that something is very wrong with him.

Stage 4. Any armour the victim wears can no longer be removed and seems to be a part of him, regenerating damage, but the character is also starting to find movement more difficult. Armour will no longer be destroyed by hits causing more than twice the armour value in damage. The character suffers -1 Speed to a minimum of 1 and gains the Regeneration Exotic Ability.

Stage 5. The victim finds he can absorb small weapons, calling them out of his body at will, but the disease is taking its toll on his sanity. The character will absorb any small weapon held, up to a maximum of five pistols or knives (including special knives). He cannot resist absorbing weapons if he holds them and has absorbed fewer than five weapons. He can always draw these in either hand and will never drop them. He also gains the Fast Draw and First Strike abilities when using these weapons. However, he loses -D10+2 Wp and the ability to use one randomly determined psychic power (if he has any). He may no longer learn new psychic powers.

Stage 6. The victim's body is now generating its own daemonic pseudo-metal-flesh, adding to the character's armour and bulk and allowing him to absorb larger and more complex weapons. However, the victim's condition is deteriorating badly. Absorbed weapons bulge and boil beneath his metal flesh and no one could mistake him for human any more. Add D6+3 armour to all locations (roll once for all locations). The character may absorb up to four basic weapons or close combat weapons in addition to the small weapons already absorbed. The character suffers an additional -1 Speed (to a minimum of 1) and -D10 Wp. The character may not sprint.

Stage 7. The victim's body is adapting to its condition and adding strength and fortitude to support the massively increasing weight. The character gains +2D10 strength and +2D10 toughness. He also gains another D6+3 armour on all locations (roll once).

Stage 8. The victim's body can now generate more complex items than just absorbed weapons, including bionic limbs and organs. The victim's metal and organic parts are now indistinguishable. Roll a D3 at the start of any game. The character may have that many advanced bionic limbs or organs. Bionic eyes may contain a single gun sight and bionic arms will have strength 50+(D6x10). The character also gains another +D10 strength, +D10 toughness and +D6 armour on all locations except the head. The victim gains the Fearsome ability. The character may not Evade.

Stage 9. The victim is beyond all help, his soul lost to Chaos and his body surrendered to the Obliterator Virus. He is an Obliterator. He gains the Regenerate and Terrifying abilities. The character may not move at any speed faster than a walk. He may absorb up to five Heavy weapons of any sort.

USING THE OBLITERATOR VIRUS IN INQUISITOR GAMES

There are many ways to use the virus in a game. The simplest is to have an infected character in an Inquisitor's staff, perhaps even the Inquisitor himself, and play out the results of the infection over several, otherwise unconnected games. Alternatively, a GM may wish to have players investigate a cult that turns out to be an Obliterator Cult, its adherents in various stages of their transformation into Obliterators!

Perhaps the most entertaining use of the virus, though, would be for the player or players to be searching for a cure to the virus, to save their master/loyal servant/blackmailer... or to provide a weapon against the Obliterator Cult that beat the pants of them last week!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robey Jenkins is the leader of the York Garrison Wargaming Club and is a regular at both the Conclave and Exterminatus.net, where he posts in the guise of Precinct Omega. He is also the owner of the Within-Without-Beyond Inquisitor Resource website. He has played table-top wargames for over twenty years and is happy to be described as "quite obsessed" with Inquisitor.

Of course, when one is dealing with what is, basically, a virus-daemon, who knows what might end up being the cure? And what turns out to work for one victim or group of victims may not be so good at helping another. A treatment may push a victim back one or more levels (a radical and desperate Inquisitor may attempt to maintain all the advantages whilst staving off the disadvantages by using such a treatment) or it may cure the victim entirely - whether he wants to be cured or not!

MODELLING THE OBLITERATOR VIRUS

Up to Stage 5, there's no need to model anything at all. However, a little greenstuff around armour plates can represent the gradual melding of flesh and armour for those at Stage 4 and beyond.

At Stages 4-6 it may also be a good idea to look for robed figures to conceal the growing horror of the infectees appearance. So Malicant, Delphan Gruss and the Astropath are all possibilities for the mid-stage infectee.

After that, the options become more complex. Characters in the final stages of infection will represent significant modelling challenges to players. Models like Krieger "Crash" Thrax, Brother Artemis, the "2000" Warhammer Giant and other, older models from the Warhammer range that are still available in the Classics section would make good bases. Players may also want to look at the new Clan Skyre Rat Ogre, which has excellent bionic parts for late-stage Obliterator infectees.

The virus also presents players with a unique opportunity: to model a single character in the early, mid and late stages, trying to carry through the recognizable features of the character as he descends into madness and Chaos. This can either be done by continually modifying a single model or by building several models. One of the advantages of building three or four models in different stages of infection is that it also provides you with the basis for an Obliterator Cult, ready for your Inquisitor to hunt them down...

THE LAST WORD

[RECORD BEGINS]

The process of absorption fascinates... [unclear] ones body might somehow swallow the item, like unto a serpent or the surface of some [viscous?] fluid. Yet it doth seem a mutual [process]. For not only doth the body absorb the [weapon] but also [doth the] weapon, in some strange way, seem to [absorb] the body... [RECORD CORRUPT] as the weapon becomes like unto my flesh, so doth mine flesh... [unclear] like unto the weapon. Indeed, I trace this [stylus] upon mine arm, and the shape and form of the weapon appears under [my touch?]. It doth not appear in mine hand so much as mine hand doth arrange itself so as to become the weapon... [BREAK IN RECORD] capakbity of mine new form to abkhorb weaponsb ish akhtonishing... [unclear] a whole lakhgun! But I do sbtart to lokbe zbe sbensbation in mine sbkin. Mine jawkb are [bardening?] and mine ribkb are protruding from mine [cbest]. Zbey are of a dull, metallic sheen and tekbtis show zbey are a mix of [bone?] and sbome metal I cannot identify... [BREAK IN RECORD] thsi wil be mmmylsat [RECORD CORRUPT] cannnnnnnnnnot useth esse febel mabcinsse aaaaany log;ner [RECORD CORRUPT] tothe eyeof the larybinbt the bearto fthe maichnetttto the ppplaceo f... metalll... [RECORD ENDS]

- From the private collection of Inquisitor Cleops, unknown origin