



Lectures On The Wych

Part 1 of house rules for Rogue Psykers in Inquisitor.

By Ben Hulston

INTRODUCTION

One particularly dark, and in my opinion, interesting corner of the Imperium that has only been scraped upon in the wider 40k gaming universe is the concept of rogue psykers, the Black Ships and the process of capture and incarceration of the psykers.

They are desperate individuals with powers they can barely contain or understand; they struggle through the Imperium vilified, despised and hunted by rabidly fanatical authorities and not-so-just, darker individuals with just as dark and clouded agendas.

... all of which makes them absolutely perfect for Inquisitor!

In the first part of this series of articles, I will highlight my own thoughts on rogue psykers, give some brief background on psykers, a character archetype "Rogue Psyker", new talents and powers for psykers, gain for players to use, abuse and experiment with.

"Of all the problems our Ordo, the great and most venerated Hereticus, faces in His most holy realm, the Imperium of Man, rogue psykers must surely be the most terrifying and potent of them all; abbumans who can turn a man inside out through force of mind and will, who can cast dark spells on whole legions of men, and worst of all those who are in league with the dark, insidious forces of the Immaterium. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, this is no small threat I speak to you about."

*Inquisitor Ratzsinger, 'Lectures on the Witch',
Conclave of Groeningen IV, 947.M40*

PSYKERS

Psykers are one of the most prized resources in the Imperium. Useful in numerous roles, they form a backbone across the Imperium as Astropaths, in the Astronomicon and as Navigators. They also keep the Emperor alive on the Golden Throne, allowing His continued guidance and beneficence to shine down on the Imperium at large.

Another great portion of psykers end up the in the Scholastica Psykana, learning to control and direct their gifts so they may serve the Emperor as adjutants to Inquisitors, as battle-psykers in the Imperial Guard, 'intelligence' agents in the Adeptus Arbites, or perhaps even be chosen for continued tutelage under an Inquisitor on the road to becoming an Inquisitor.

However, as good a job as the Black Ships of the Inquisition may do in collecting psykers from all planets from all corners of the Imperium, there will always be those who slip through the net.

ROGUES

Psykers are considered a high priority menace if they have not been collected and corralled to be taken away by the Black Ships. There is a palpable sense of fear when it is reported that a rogue psyker is on the loose.

Tales of "wychmagic" spread like wildfire through human settlements of any size and technological accomplishment, the Ecclesiarchy more often than not fanning the flames of prejudice with scathing sermons and fanatical diatribe.

On some planets superstition takes over with people placing warding symbols and placatory gifts outside their homes, in the hope that the wych will pass over their abode and leave them alone.

On other worlds, large scale panic can set in, with riots, hysteria on the streets and chaos ensuing in the aftermath of the news. Mass PDF deployments are sometimes necessary in order to quell the panic quickly.

However, this panic and level of superstition surrounding rogue psykers is not surprising.

Rogue psykers can devastate whole cities, ruin minds and even worse become vulnerable to daemonic possession, possibly resulting in a chaos incursion on the planet where the psyker currently is.

RENEGADES

The life of the rogue psyker is generally short and overwhelmingly unpleasant. They will be hunted like dogs by fanatics, bounty hunters, the local authorities or the Inquisition. The odds will almost certainly be stacked in favour of the hunters; through sheer force of numbers, experience of the hunt or technological superiority a rogue psyker will quickly find themselves cornered, captured or killed.

Those who are captured will invariably be tortured in publicly screened trials. These trials can include any of a number of horrors, from simple tests such as the "Trial by Blade", "Trial by Water", or worse, darker horrors. They will be forced to admit crimes from petty thievery to high treason and treachery, crimes for which the Imperium demands the life and soul of the convicted.

Inevitably and in no small amount of agony, the psyker will end up dead.

Those who are cornered are sometimes offered another path.

There are a number of groups who are interested in the liberation of psykers from the Imperial yoke. Several hidden, but quite active, groups exist to help rogues flee from the clutches of the Black Ships.

Speculation runs rife as to who is sponsoring and supporting these groups. Some point to the radical elements within the Inquisition, primarily the Thorians and the hated Horusians. It is speculated Inquisitors may sponsor these groups to have access to possible bodies for their Horusian/Thorian avatar ideals.

Other, darker speculation whispers that chaotic cults are responsible, using the psykers in dark rituals to fuel their sorcery. This theory has many merits and has often been proven correct, through investigations by such luminaries as Inquisitor Ratzsinger and Dosedam; indeed, on more than one occasion cults trafficking the psykers have been caught and exterminated by both Inquisitors.

More recently, it has come to light that there is an underground movement calling themselves "The Renegades" who are liberating psykers and allowing them to use their talents

wantonly in open Imperial society. This group is thought to make ample use of the special abilities of its members, making money through gambling circuits, underground fighting clubs and through other criminal activity.

Talented psykers can find gainful employment with the criminal element of the Imperium. The underworld values those who can see through lies, read people like books and rip information from minds, though for those without proper training and discipline this can be just as dangerous for them as it is for their victim.

It is this lack of training and discipline which makes the unsanctioned psyker such a fearful and potent threat - without correct training, their powers fluctuate wildly resulting in massive psychic accidents and incidents.

THE INQUISITION

As is stated in their mandate, it is the Ordo Hereticus who are primarily responsible for dealing with the threat posed by rogue psykers within the Imperium, with secondary responsibility being fielded by the Ordo Malleus though their responsibility centres on investigations involving daemonic activity and rogue psykers.

The Ordo Hereticus deploys several specialist forces and weapons to deal with rogue psykers. Many Inquisitors rely on their own expansive network of informants and information gathering systems. They will employ contacts on the Black Ships, in the Arbites and PDF, and in the Administratum to ensure they have as much knowledge as possible.

Unsanctioned Psykers

An unsanctioned psyker is an individual with psychic talent who has not been taken by the Black Ships for testing on Terra. Their powers are unrefined, haphazard but potentially devastating for themselves and any unlucky enough to be caught in their wake.

The common profile of an unsanctioned psyker varies wildly. One thing runs in common, however; they are resourceful, cunning people with a knack for escape, especially the experienced ones who have been on the run for more than a few months.

	WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
Unsanctioned Psyker	45	45	35	35	50	65	60	40	50
Random	40+D10	40+D10	30+D10	30+D10	40+2D10	45+5D10	50+2D10	35+D10	45+D10

Equipment: Generally, an unsanctioned psyker will not be able to lay their hands on much more than common gear. However, if they are resourceful or well supported, rare or exotic gear is certainly not out of the question.

Special Abilities: Undisciplined Psyker

Undisciplined Psyker

An undisciplined psyker must make a willpower test with each action they use to concentrate, or lose any bonus they have accumulated. In addition, they will lose double the willpower from any failed psychic test.

NEW TALENTS FOR PSYKERS

A Quick Note on the Following Talents – These talents are designed with Rogue Psykers in mind, using the profile suggested above. They are not exactly balanced, and it is suggested that you seek permission or guidance from your GM before seeking to use any of these talents on your PC. The author very strongly suggests none of the following talents be used by a PC such as an Inquisitor or any other trained psychic character.

Pyromancer

'Flames danced on his fingertips and in his eyes, smoke drifted from his nostrils, and a breath later those chasing him were immolated.'

The psyker may only take powers from the pyromancy discipline.

The psyker classes all powers within the pyromancy discipline as difficulty 0. All range modifiers still apply. However there is a 10% chance the psyker, when using this talent, will set D3 locations on him on fire as per the rules for flamers.

Others will use bounty hunters to help them track down psykers. Some bounty hunters even specialise in this line of work, deploying horrifyingly debilitating weapons in order to bring down their prey as quickly as possible.

Some Inquisitors will call on the vast reserves of the Imperium itself, recruiting psykers from the Scholastica Psykana to help them track down the psykers. The Scholastica has specially trained psychics they attach to the Black Ships to aid the process of tracking down and incarcerating rogue psykers. These psykers are often seconded to an Inquisitor's staff. They have a great dedication to their cause, take great pleasure in the hunting process and have been nicknamed "Soulhounds" as a result.

Other Inquisitors, however, take a more liberal stance when it comes to rogue psykers. As noted previously, some inquisitors will take on these rogues for their own nefarious purposes. In these cases, diplomacy, outright blackmail and bribery are just as effective as forcefully capturing the psyker.

"Know your enemy, friends and colleagues. Know the wych as well as you know the man next to you, as well as you know yourself even! For your faith will keep your resolve against beresy strong!"

*Inquisitor Ratzinger, 'Lectures on the Witch',
Conclave of Groeningen IV, 947.M40*

Puppetmaster

'She warped their minds, turning friend against friend, laughing all the while at us, puppets on her strings.'

The psyker may only take powers from the Telepathy discipline.

The psyker counts all powers in the Telepathy discipline, except "Enforce Will", as difficulty 0. All ranged penalties still apply. The difficulty for "Enforce Will" is counted as 1/10 of the target's willpower. Where any test is required to resist the effects of one of the telepath's powers, such as Puppet Master, the target counts as having willpower.

Any psychic feedback penalty will deduct the same amount from sagacity, nerve and leadership as it does from willpower.

Talented Psyker

'He flung his powers about with reckless abandon, knowing the perils of using his wychery were virtually non-existent.'

A psyker with this power never classes using a psychic ability as a Risky Action and halves any willpower deductions from psychic feedback. This talent may not be taken with any of the other talents listed here.

Natural Psyker

'As she fled from us, she flung fire and baleful glares of death at us. Climbing the ladder, she blasted us with an arc of lightning before she made good her escape.'

A psyker with this power may perform a psychic power as a combined action, using his full willpower on the test. Any psychic powers performed, using this talent, will not gain any bonus for concentrating. This talent may be used to cast two psychic powers in one action, at a penalty of -20 in addition to any other penalties associated with the powers.

This talent may not be combined with any of the other talents listed here.

Alpha

'And they whispered amongst themselves in fear, for an abomination had come... Alpha...'

The psyker classes all psychic powers they use as having 1/2 the stated difficulty. Any persistent powers maintain themselves without further willpower tests. Any range penalties are also discounted. No line of sight is required for any power, though psychic bolts may not pass through any physical barriers. A character with the Alpha talent must also take the "Unstable" talent.

Monstrous Telekinetic

'Through the sheer force of his mind, he plucked the fuel tank from its couplings. We ran, and didn't look back.'

A psyker with this power classes any object they attempt to move using the power "Telekinesis" as 1/10 of the objects normal weight. The object may be moved one yard per point of willpower the psyker possesses.

Any psychic feedback penalties suffer an additional penalty equal to the weight of the object.

Warpshield

'We emptied clip after clip at her, but all the bullets seemed to do was vanish inches from the damn wycb...'

The psyker counts as having a D10 psychic force-field on all locations at all times. This shield may stack with Psychic Shield and Psychic Ward.

Unstable

'We saw him clawing at things that weren't there, screaming at voices we couldn't hear. His eyes glowed for but a moment, before he returned back to the moment...'

The psyker must take a willpower test at the beginning of each turn, and an additional test if they fail any psychic test. If they fail, the psyker is subject to testing on the following table...

1-2 Possessed! – Randomly choose D3 of the Daemonic properties within the Inquisitor rulebook on page 62, with an equal chance of each of the properties. The psyker is now subject to GM control, if they weren't before, who is instructed to act as per the instructions for daemon-weapon possession.

3-4 Hallucinations! – Roll once on the table on page 89 of the Inquisitor rulebook and apply the effects.

5-6 Storm! – All characters, including the character, within 3D10 yards and line of sight of the psyker are targeted by the "Storm of Lightning" psychic power.

7-8 Power! – The psyker is racked with sorcerous power. The psyker is hit in D3 locations for D6 damage, but doubles their willpower for D3 turns.

9-0 Vortex! – The psyker has ripped a hole into the Warp. Treat this as the psychic power "Vortex of Chaos", with radius 2D10. The psyker is automatically sucked into the vortex.

NEW PSYCHIC POWERS

Telepathy

Mindshock

Difficulty – 25

The psyker launches a crippling barrage on the mind of their target, attempting to ruin the mind of their foe.

Mindshock is a ranged power, and also requires line of sight. The target deducts the amount the psychic test used to cast the power is passed by from their willpower for D3 turns, is stunned for D3 turns and falls prone.

Mental Fortress

Difficulty – 20

The psyker steels himself against telepathic onslaught, his mind becoming a fortress in which he can hide his sanity.

Steel Mind is a persistent power and may only ever target the psyker themselves. Any attempt to use a telepathy discipline power against the psyker is at a -20 penalty.

Whisper

Difficulty – 20

The psyker whispers dark nothings into the mind of the target, robbing them of their resolve.

Whisper is a ranged power. The target deducts the amount the psychic test is passed by from their nerve. In addition, they lose any of the following abilities if they have them - Nerves of Steel, Force of Will, Heroic or Leader, for D3 turns.

Spiked Mind

Difficulty – 30

The psyker wraps their mind in a coating of raw warp energy, causing an unwelcome intruder to suffer dire consequences, but at a potential cost to themselves...

Spiked Mind is a persistent power. Any attempt to use a telepathic power on the psyker will immediately suffer psychic feedback - however, the psyker must take a willpower test or also suffer psychic feedback.

Biomancy

Iron Skin

Difficulty – 20

The psykers skin gains a strange metallic hue, seems much harder and cold to the touch, and yet retains all the supple movement it had before.

Iron Skin is a persistent power. For each full 10% the psychic test is passed by, the psyker gains 1 point of armour on all locations.

Cloud Senses

Difficulty – Target's toughness

The psyker confuses and confounds the target, blurring their senses from within.

Cloud senses is a ranged and persistent power and requires line of sight. The target is knocked prone, their initiative, weapon and ballistic skill are halved and all movement actions become Risky Actions. Any awareness tests are taken at a -30 penalty.

Lashes

Difficulty – 30

The psyker reaches out with his mental powers causing brutal and bleeding wounds all over the body of their target.

Lashes is a ranged power and requires line of sight. Lashes causes D10 damage to D3 locations on the target model, which ignore armour. Additionally, the locations affected all begin bleeding, as per the rules on page 48 of the Inquisitor rulebook.

Annihilate

Difficulty – Target's toughness

The psyker reaches into the targets innards, churning them and pulling them from the inside out!

Annihilate is a ranged power and requires line of sight. The target must take a toughness test at a penalty equal to the amount the psyker passed their psychic test, or suffer acute injuries on D3 random locations, the minimum required damage being applied to take the target to those levels. If the same location is hit more than once in the same casting, no further effects are applied.

Pyromancy

Inferno

Difficulty – 10

Summoning great gouts of flame from their hands, the psyker drowns the immediate area ahead of him in searing fire.

Treat the psyker as having fired a heavy flamer, as detailed on page 70 of the Inquisitor rulebook, in any direction out from the model. This power may be used as a combat action in hand to hand combat at arms length.

Conflagration

Difficulty – 20

The psyker draws in a great ball of warp energy, expelling it as a huge fiery explosion from his current location.

Conflagration is an explosion, centred on the psyker, with Area: 2D10, Blast: 5, 2D10 damage.

General

Fragment Image

Difficulty – 10

By altering the air around the psyker, they are able to distort the view any enemy may have of them, causing them to be much harder to hit with ranged weapons.

Fragment Image is a persistent power. After the power has been activated, all shooting actions against the psyker are at a -20 penalty, in addition to any other penalties.

Chameleon

Difficulty – 30

The psyker creates a complex illusion, allowing them to stand still and undetected by all around them.

Chameleon is a persistent power. The psyker becomes, for all intents and purposes, invisible to visual and aural detection when using this power when standing still. They may still be detected using auspexes and psychic detection methods, but at a -30 penalty. If the psyker moves, they may be spotted by conventional means at a -30 penalty.

CONCLUSION

Rogue psykers are an uncontrollable, unpredictable but most importantly fun element for players to throw into their games of Inquisitor. The rules given here are intended to provide a framework and a seed of inspiration for any who read them.

NEXT TIME...

Part two in the "Lectures on the Wych" series will cover some specialist equipment for hunting psykers, some scenario ideas to use rogue psykers in, and some special abilities for Witch Hunters.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ben indulges his various passions rather more frequently than he should while attempting to complete his education at Loughborough University. He can be found ranting and raving on the Conclave and is generally rated as a nuisance by the other, more decent folk who grace the forum.

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