CORRUPTION RULES

This chapter introduces the rules covering the accumulation of corruption, the risks posed by having too much corruption, and mutations. The GM should become familiar with these rules before bringing them into play, and may wish to share some of this information with his players the first time they are exposed to a corrupting influence, or if their characters conduct research or investigate corruption, mutation, or Chaos in more detail during the game.

> These rules were first introduced in *Winds of Magic*. For the cards, components and more information on corruption and mutation, *Winds of Magic* is recommended.

SHOW SOME MERCY!

As you will no doubt soon realise, developing mutations is very bad for a character's well being! Becoming a mutant is effectively a death sentence in the Empire unless a character goes to great length to disguise his deformities. Even lucky and careful mutant characters will effectively cease to be functioning members of society.

With such great risks at stake, GMs are advised to use these rules sparingly and to make sure that their players are forewarned as to the dangers of touching warpstone and other artefacts carried by the followers of Chaos. After all, every child raised in the Empire is told numerous cautionary tales against such foolhardy behaviour.

Bear in mind that, whilst PCs might be reckless enough to ignore lessons they should have learned on their mother's knee, NPCs are not likely to allow PCs to endanger them or their families.

For example, should a party of PCs enter a village whilst openly bearing shards of warpstone or some hideously profane artefact trailing wisps of tainted energy, they will cause panic. Most Empire folk simply assume that those who carry Chaos artefacts are worshippers of the dark gods, and they will take appropriate measures to eliminate them.

CORRUPTION IN PLAY

Corruption is one way to track a character's exposure to the unpredictable effects of Chaos. Characters can suffer from corruption in a number of ways. It can attract misfortune, cause madness, or lead to the most overt sign of corruption—mutation.

When a character is exposed to a corrupting influence he potentially accumulates corruption. Corruption is represented by purple diamond-shaped tokens. These tokens are gained and kept in a similar way to stress or fatigue counters, and should remain visible to the players and GM. They come in 1 and 5 point denominations for easier tracking.

CORRUPTING INFLUENCES

A variety of different encounters or events may trigger the accumulation of corruption. The magnitude of the event indicates how difficult it is to shrug off the effects, as well as the potential amount of corruption that may be generated. The following levels of exposure indicate the inherent risk when first coming into contact with the triggering event.

Subsequent exposure to the same trigger may have the same magnitude and risk, or the GM may choose to lower the difficulty if the character succeeded particularly well during previous exposure.

In each instance, a failed check results in corruption equal to the challenge level. Regardless of the check's success or failure, the character also suffers one corruption for each Chaos Star generated during the check.

For example, failing an **Average (2d) Resilience check** after minor exposure to a corrupting influence results in two corruption. Succeeding at a **Hard (3d) Resilience check** while generating one Chaos Star when exposed to a moderate corrupting influence results in one corruption.

Finally, some creatures may have attacks or special abilities which inflict corruption, in addition to other effects. In these situations, the amount of corruption gained will be listed with the ability.

MINOR EXPOSURE:
AVERAGE (2D) RESILIENCE CHECK

This level of exposure includes low grade or minimum exposure to a corrupting influence. Could also be used to represent exposure over time to an otherwise trivial corrupting influence.

Examples could include:

✚ Prolonged exposure to skaven, beastmen, or Chaos cult paraphernalia or locations

✚ First hand witness to daemonic activities or rites

✚ Contact with a traveller of the Chaos Wastes

✚ Brief exposure to a small warpstone chunk

MODERATE EXPOSURE:
HARD (3D) RESILIENCE CHECK

Moderate exposure reflects a more pronounced single event or circumstance, or more prolonged exposure to a corrupting influence. Could also be used to represent exposure over time to an otherwise minor corrupting influence.

Examples could include:

✚ Prolonged exposure to a Chaos Warrior, daemonic cult, or tainted paraphernalia or locations

✚ Contact with a cursed weapon, profane artefact, or daemonic entity

✚ Exposure to a large amount of warpstone

MAJOR EXPOSURE:
DAUNTING (4D) RESILIENCE CHECK

This represents high grade or more prolonged exposure to a corrupting influence. Could also be used to represent exposure over time to an otherwise moderate corrupting influence.

Examples could include:

✚ Wounded by a cursed weapon, profane artefact, or daemonic entity

✚ Exposure to the savage Chaos Wastes and its environs

✚ Consumption of warpstone powder

✚ Direct exposure to a large amount of warpstone, or using warpstone to fuel spells

CORRUPTION THRESHOLDS

The different races of the Old World have varying tolerance to the corrupting effects of Chaos. From the viewpoint of dwarfs and elves, humans tend to be frail and easily susceptible to the ravages of Chaos. This perception is partly due to the fact that dwarfs and elves enjoy an incredibly high tolerance to Chaos, and are not affected by mutation the way humans are.

An individual character's corruption threshold is based on his race and his Toughness rating.

✚ **Human:** 5 + Toughness

✚ **Dwarf:** 10 + Toughness

✚ **High Elf:** 10 + Toughness

✚ **Wood Elf:** 10 + Toughness

These thresholds apply to all members of that type of race. So all humans, whether from the Reikland, Nordland, or Talabheim, have the same corruption threshold.

THE EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION

There are two main effects of corruption—generally referred to as manifestation and mutation. The first effect, manifestation is a relatively minor effect, that of inviting danger and adversity. This effect can be triggered by the GM at any time to make a check more challenging for a character with corruption.

The second effect, mutation, is triggered when the number of corruption points a character has exceeds the character's corruption threshold. Such a condition is very dangerous for a character as they will develop insanity or mutation as a result.

GM Invocation

Over the course of play, the GM has the option to "manifest" or "invoke" a character's corruption, weaving into the story that the exposure to corruption or taint is rearing its head. The GM narrates how the corruption is manifesting, which makes the upcoming task more challenging. The corruption might manifest as an overwhelming sense of temptation, painful cramps, or whispered daemonic voices only the character can hear.

Mechanically speaking, before a player performs an action, the GM may take one of the character's corruption points and replace it with a purple challenge die that gets added to the task's dice pool. The corruption token is returned to the general supply. No more than one corruption may be invoked in this manner per check.

Mutation & Insanity

Once a PC has accumulated more corruption points than his character's corruption threshold (based on the character's Race and Toughness), the corruption has ravaged the character's body and mind and manifests as a mutation (for humans) or insanity (for elves, dwarfs, and other races).

Mutation

For humans and other susceptible races, when the corruption threshold is passed, the player draws a mutation card from the deck *(See Table A-4 Mutation in Appendix, page 162)*. In addition to its other effects and rules, each mutation card has a severity rating, which indicates how much corruption is consumed in the transformation. For example, if the PC suffers from a mutation with a severity 4 rating, he returns 4 corruption point tokens to the supply when he draws that card.

If, after a mutation, the character is still above his corruption threshold, another mutation card is drawn, the process being repeated until the PC has corruption points equal to or less than his corruption threshold.

Insanity

Dwarfs and elves (as well as a few other notable races like halflings) are notoriously resistant to the ravages of corruption. Not only do these races have a significantly higher threshold than humans before succumbing to corruption, they are not afflicted by physical mutations.

Rather, when a member of one of these races accumulates corruption greater than his threshold, he gains an insanity. He draws an insanity card from the deck, until he has acquired an insanity with the *Supernatural* or *Chaos* trait, or an eligible trait based on his race—such as an insanity card with the *Dwarf* trait being drawn by a dwarf character *(Table A-2 Insanity in Appendix, page 158)*.

In addition to its other effects and rules, each insanity card has a severity rating, which indicates how much corruption is consumed in the transformation. For example, if an elf PC suffers from an insanity with a severity 3 rating over the course of this process, he returns 3 corruption points to the supply when he draws that card.

MUTATION CARDS

Name. The name of the mutation, providing some flavour and context for the impairment listed.

Traits. Each mutation card has one or more traits. These may be compared to the triggering effect to see what sort of mutation occurs.

Effect. The mutation's game effect is listed here.

Flavour Text. The description helps add context and additional information about the mutation.

Set Icon. Each card is marked with a set icon to quickly identify which product the card is from.

Severity Rating. This number indicates how severe the mutation is. The higher this number, the more corruption the mutation consumes as it manifests.

If, after acquiring an insanity in this manner, the character is still above his corruption threshold, another insanity card is drawn, the process being repeated until the PC has corruption points equal to or less than his threshold.

AMASSING MUTATION

The human body can only withstand so much corruption and Chaos energy before it loses all semblance to its former self and devolves into a hideous monstrosity, known as a Chaos Spawn. These horrible mutations also wreak havoc on the mind, eroding an individual's sense of self and ability to function.

FALLING TO CHAOS

If a character accumulates more mutations than his Toughness rating, he is immediately transformed into a Chaos Spawn (see *Creatures of the Old World* for details).

Those unfortunate enough to witness the transformation may wish to seek cover, before their former ally attempts to rip them apart with an amorphous, multi-hued pseudopod. The horrific transformation causes Terror 2.

After transforming into a Chaos Spawn, the character is no longer suitable for a player to run, and a replacement character should be considered. From this point on the character becomes an NPC and the GM decides what becomes of him.

The Chaos Spawn may disappear, heading towards the Chaos Wastes, he might run wild in an orgy of bloodshed, or may follow the characters for a while at a distance, bonded to them by foggy memories of companionship.

If a character accumulates more mutations than his Willpower rating (and has not yet devolved into a gibbering Chaos Spawn), he immediately gains a permanent insanity for each mutation greater than his Willpower. For example, a PC with Willpower 3 would immediately gain a permanent insanity once he gains his fourth mutation, and another permanent insanity if he gains a fifth mutation.

LOSING CORRUPTION

Once corruption has been gained, the two most common ways to lower the character's corruption are the two methods described earlier—the GM invoking the corruption to influence a task, or the corruption fueling a mutation.

However, the GM should also consider other means by which a character may be able to remove corruption. These alternate means should be significant stories, perhaps the central theme or motivation behind a series of adventures, or the ultimate reward for a dramatic and exciting campaign. Here are just a few suggestions.

+ Completing an important holy quest to eradicate a corrupted zealot and his throng of followers, at the behest of the Cult of Sigmar

+ Receiving a blessing from the High Priestesses of the Cult of Shallya for stopping a grand plot by a group of Nurgle Cultists

+ Successfully surviving a harrowing, convoluted experiment for the Colleges of Magic that sought to unravel the very nature of corruption

+ Destroying a powerful profane relic or artefact, purging a dangerous source of corruption from the Old World

+ Cleansing an important wood elf forest glade of a tainted beastmen herdstone and the mutant Wargor and his followers who gather there

+ Recovering an ancient elven artefact with curious healing properties from a mysterious temple hidden deep in the Reikwald Forest, and returning it to a High Elf Ambassador in Marienburg

Even with these suggestions in mind, it is strongly encouraged that the GM not allow corruption to simply heal over time or through rest. Corruption and the taint of Chaos are serious risks and afflictions in the Warhammer Fantasy setting.

Woe is he who bears the mark of Chaos. For he is already dead, though his mind may not yet know it.

–Canticle Six, from Litany of the Damned

Marks of Chaos

In addition to gaining corruption points and eventually acquiring mutations or insanities as a result, there is another way a character may be touched by Chaos—he may bear a Mark of Chaos.

A Mark of Chaos is a sign of favour from one of the Ruinous Powers, often bestowed upon a loyal subject. It is a brand connecting the person to his foul deity, and an outward sign of his devotion. Marks of Chaos can come in many different shapes, styles, or designs, but are clearly associated with their Ruinous Power and often the actual symbol of that god. Here are just a few examples.

✛ A Mark of Tzeentch may manifest as a pulsing blue Chaos Star, a raven tattoo that appears to be flying across the subject's skin, or a sinuous, writhing flame emblazoned on the subject's back.

✛ A Mark of Nurgle may be a distended boil oozing foetid pus, an open sore weeping a stream of maggots, or a pox-marked patch of vaguely green-tinted skin that constantly sheds and peels.

✛ A Mark of Khorne may change the marked person's eyes to deep, blood red, it may manifest as a dark red battle scar still wet with crimson blood, or a skull-shaped knob or deformity on the marked one's flesh.

✛ A Mark of Slaanesh may be a subtle, intoxicating scent of musk lingering to the person, a slightly dreamy, purplish tinge to the marked one's lips, eyes, and hair, or the growth of additional nipples.

Followers of the same Ruinous Power have an uncanny intuition, allowing them to sense when someone bearing their deity's Mark of Chaos is nearby. Bearers of a Mark of Chaos usually go to great lengths to hide it from non-believers, as recognition of such a sign is a death sentence, sure to draw the attention of Witch Hunters, angry mobs, or worse.

The Mark of Tzeentch

Assigning a Chaos Mark to an NPC is a new option GM can use to distinguish or tailor encounters to suit the story or challenge his players. The leader of a powerful cult, or an NPC who has been lured to Tzeentch's service by the promise of knowledge or power may be so marked by the Changer of Ways.

The Mark of Tzeentch has two different passive effects. First, a character targeting someone bearing the Mark of Tzeentch with an action suffers 1 stress if they generate one or more ✿ in his check, in addition to any other effects the Chaos Stars may impose.

Second, a character bearing the Mark of Tzeentch is imbued with arcane abilities. He can acquire and cast spells with the *Tzeentch* trait, and automatically acquires the Channelling and Spellcraft skills, as well as the Channel Power action, powering his spells like a wizard does. If the character so marked already has Channelling or Spellcraft acquired or trained, he gains an additional expertise die to all related checks.

The GM may wish to detail other effects, possibly positive or negative, for a Chaos Mark, as well. For example, a character bearing a Chaos Mark may suffer difficulties when forced to interact with people who are not affiliated with his chosen Ruinous Power, as he struggles to keep his mark and devotion a secret—for if the secret were to be revealed, the Witch Hunters would burn him at the stake.

The exact nature and magnitude of these additional effects are left up to the GM.

MARK OF TZEENTCH

Attacks targeting you gain:
✿ Attacker suffers 1 stress.

You acquire Channelling and Spellcraft, or ▢ with these skills if already acquired. You can Channel Power and cast *Tzeentch* spells like a wizard.