

Volume 2 - Chapter 9 - Inheritance III

The Rune priest cupped his chin, his sharp eyes fixed on the Inheritance Star.

"Maybe," he muttered, half to himself, "it'd be better to add some more visual examples... The Star's supposed to be clear enough, but it doesn't really show how these Inheritances *feel* when they shape a Power; not really."

His gaze shifted to the husks of trees about thirty meters away.

After a moment, he nodded, almost as much to himself as to the world around him, and looked back at Thea.

"*Fireballs*," he said, his grin spreading wide.

For the first time since entering the training hall, Thea felt like she could follow his train of thought. She nodded quickly. "That *would* help, I think."

His grin grew even wider as he turned toward the clearing of husked trees.

"There's just *one* tiny problem," he said, his tone almost playful. "I'm an Aural Psyker. I can't just conjure Fireballs influenced by other Inheritances. As I mentioned earlier, every Psyker only has *one* Inheritance."

He snapped his fingers, the sound cutting through the quiet clearing.

"But isn't it *just fortuitous*," he continued, his voice dripping with mock cheer, "that we're inside the Sovereign's DDS? That means *she* can help us out of this little problem. Isn't that all too *convenient*?"

Something in his tone made Thea pause.

It wasn't the words themselves—they were straightforward enough—but the faint mocking edge in his voice sent a shiver down her spine. It wasn't overtly cruel, but there was something distinctly unsettling about it, something that made her skin crawl despite her inability to pinpoint *why*.

She expected him to immediately call upon the Sovereign, but instead, he simply remained standing there, staring at the husked remains of the trees in complete silence.

The silence stretched between them, heavy and uncomfortable, leaving Thea unsure of what he was planning. When she realised that the Rune priest's words hadn't been rhetorical after all, she broke the silence by speaking up.

"That is indeed quite fortunate, Rune priest," she replied hesitantly, her voice carrying a layer of awkwardness as she tried to navigate the unease she felt.

As though her words had triggered something, the Rune priest snapped back into focus, his tone shifting smoothly into a commanding cadence. “Sovereign, be so kind and help us out with this demonstration, would you?”

He pointed toward the husked trees. “Repair the clearing and prepare some targets interspersed with the trees. Let’s say... ten of them. Make them equivalent to Tier 1 Stellar Republic Soldiers and include a variety of armor types. I want some visual variation between them and differing levels of protection. That should make it interesting.”

He hummed thoughtfully for a moment, his fingers tapping idly against his leg, before adding, “And set their Resolve to 2.5 across the board. We’ll deal with Attributes in another session. For now, this demonstration will focus exclusively on Inheritance interactions. Yes... let’s go with that. Do so now, Sovereign.”

“Affirmative, Venerable Rune priest,” replied the monotone voice of the ship’s AI, cutting through the air with its typical, cold efficiency.

The clearing immediately began to transform.

The husked trees straightened and smoothed, their bark regenerating with unnatural speed.

Around the newly restored clearing, ten figures materialized as requested—Stellar Republic Soldiers clad in a variety of armor types ranging from Light to Ultra-Heavy. Some took up defensive positions, hiding behind trees or their more heavily armored comrades, while others stood boldly in the open, as though daring someone to attack.

“Perfect,” the Rune priest chuckled to himself, a faint note of satisfaction in his voice as he turned back toward Thea. “Now, let us continue with the demonstrations, shall we?”

Thea nodded immediately. She didn’t want to risk another awkward moment of misjudging one of the Rune priest’s statements as rhetorical when it wasn’t.

The Inheritance Polarity Star hovered back into view between them before the Rune priest extended a finger toward the crimson gem at the very top—the 12-o’clock position.

“This,” he began, his voice taking on a slightly formal tone, “is the first Inheritance that most Psykers encounter during their Delves—an entirely separate topic we will cover in-depth during a later session. Universally represented by the color Crimson Red, it is known as *Perditio*. It embodies the fundamental force of *Destruction* within the Void and everything that the word entails.”

He paused briefly, letting the meaning of the words sink in before continuing. “According to our data, 13.23% of all Psykers end up with this Inheritance, making it the second-most-common Inheritance in existence—only surpassed by my own, *Aurae*.”

Thea’s brow furrowed slightly at the strangely exact nature of the presented statistic, but she remained silent, listening intently as he elaborated, simply filing away the percentage for later—precise numbers were always good to have for theorycrafting, after all.

“*Perditio*,” the Rune priest continued, “is often referred to as the ‘Battlefield Psyker Inheritance,’ and for very good—and arguably quite obvious—reason. It excels at causing widespread, catastrophic, and immediate destruction. As the name implies, that is its specialty, and most Psykers who inherit it lean heavily into that very aspect, shaping their Power portfolio around creating devastatingly large-scale damage on the battlefield.”

He paused briefly, glancing at Thea to ensure she was keeping up.

“*Perditio* Psykers don’t dabble in nuance; their Inheritance is not made for it. Their strength lies in their ability to devastate everything in their path quickly and decisively, before nuance is even required. You will generally find that *Perditio* Psykers specialize in physical Paths—rather than metaphysical ones like your own Short-Term Precognition. Low-Tier *Perditio* Psykers are often drawn to elemental Paths like Fire, Lightning, and Ice, as these offer a wide range of directly damaging Powers. Each of these elemental Paths thrives greatly under the *Perditio* Inheritance’s lens, amplifying the sheer scale and intensity of their destruction manifold; just like the *Veritas* Inheritance greatly amplified your [Eyes of the Void] Power earlier.”

He clapped his hands together suddenly, the sharp sound echoing through the clearing.

A ball of fire materialized before him, its flames a brilliantly pure shade of crimson red, flickering with an unnatural intensity.

His toothy grin returned, and his eyes seemed to reflect the fire’s glow, giving him an almost predatory look as he glanced between the flames and Thea.

“Glad to see the Sovereign understood the assignment on this one without needing further instructions,” he said, chuckling softly to himself before locking eyes with Thea again.

“Now,” he continued, gesturing to the fireball floating before him, “this is the same Fireball Power I used earlier—same Power, same Intent, same Energy usage—but with the Sovereign simulating the application of the *Perditio* Inheritance, instead of me applying my *Aurae* one.”

He raised a single finger, his tone turning serious. “Take note: This is *not* a true Psychic Power being demonstrated here. For obvious reasons, the Sovereign can only create a digital reconstruction of what a Power with these exact parameters would look like. Functionally, there is no difference for us in this demonstration, but with certain Powers and Inheritances, the distinction *can* become critically important. So just note this for the future; in case you notice some discrepancies between the DDS and real-life situations in these regards.”

Thea nodded again, her eyes locked on the fireball, as she braced herself for what would undoubtedly follow the Rune priest’s words.

She noticed the Rune priest’s smile widen ever so slightly at her unwavering focus, but to her relief, he didn’t make any teasing remarks. Instead, his gaze shifted eagerly back to the tiny, floating orb of crimson fire, his excitement mirrored in the glint of his eyes.

“So,” he muttered, his tone taking on a subtle edge of pure delight, “let’s see what this *Perditio* Fireball can do, shall we?”

With a simple flick of his hand, he directed the fireball toward the targets set thirty meters away.

To Thea’s surprise—and slight alarm—the fireball didn’t move with the steady, deliberate pace she had come to expect from his earlier two demonstrations.

It was not the speed of a grenade-like throw from a seasoned Marine she had seen with the basic and *Aurae*-influenced fireballs. Instead, it tore through the air like a bullet, vanishing from her sight for a split second as it accelerated far faster than she had anticipated.

She blinked, startled, as her eyes tried and failed to keep up with its movement.

By the time her eyes caught up to it, the fireball had already reached its destination—and then it erupted.

The explosion wasn’t just violent; it was *apocalyptic*.

The tiny red ball expanded into a massive sphere of fiery destruction, glowing an intense, blinding shade of crimson. The blast was like a miniature warhead detonating with the force of something fired from a capital ship in orbit.

It consumed everything within a ten-meter radius in a mere instant, the heat and light radiating outward and consuming everything nearby with terrifying intensity.

The trees closest to the blast disintegrated instantly upon impact, their bark and branches reduced to ash in a fraction of a second.

The targets positioned near the epicenter didn’t fare any better either.

The lighter-armored dummies were obliterated immediately, their forms vanishing as if they had never existed. Those clad in heavier armor were flung backward like ragdolls, their plating instantly glowing red-hot for a brief moment in time before collapsing entirely into warped, molten shapes, the flesh underneath the metal vaporizing into ash at once.

Even the trees just outside the immediate blast zone didn’t escape untouched.

Their bark blackened and charred like the nearest star had just turned its ire upon them, smoke rising from their singed surfaces as the pressure wave ripped through the clearing, snapping branches and toppling the weaker ones outright.

The shockwave rippling outward was so immense that Thea instinctively braced herself, her breath catching in her throat. She felt the tremendous heat slam against her like a physical force, even though the air between her and the explosion shimmered faintly with an iridescent barrier.

The Rune priest had clearly erected it at some point, though she hadn’t noticed when.

Despite the barrier's protection, the sheer power of the fireball was beyond evident, the heat licking at her skin painfully and the pressure pushing against her chest like an unseen hand.

Thea's jaw dropped as she took in the aftermath, her mind racing to process what she had just witnessed. The fireball's size and the Rune priest's casual, almost nonchalant motion in firing it had done *nothing* to prepare her for the sheer scale of the destruction it caused.

"That... that is *insane*," she whispered, her voice trembling slightly as her wide eyes darted between the smoldering wreckage and the Rune priest. "That tiny thing... it... how is that even *possible*?"

The Rune priest turned back toward her, his smile now almost wolfish, though his tone remained as casual as ever.

"*That*," he said, gesturing toward the devastation, "is the power of *Perditio*. Magnitudes stronger than any simple application of Psychic Energy. Destruction in its purest form. And that," He tapped the shimmering barrier still flickering faintly in front of her. "Is why I set up a shield. Even *I* don't feel like explaining to Zephyr why the star-student she gave me got fried during the very first lesson for no reason."

He chuckled, his tone casual and light, as though the devastation before them were nothing more than a routine classroom exercise, rather than a jaw-dropping display of destructive power that no logical universe should allow to exist at the fingertips of any individual person.

Thea, however, continued to stare at the scorched clearing, her thoughts racing. '*If that's what a tiny fireball could do... What would a larger, fully-charged Power possibly look like...?*'

The question lingered in Thea's mind, equal parts thrilling and terrifying alike.

"Sovereign, reset the area," the Rune priest ordered, his tone so nonchalant it almost felt surreal against the backdrop of the destruction.

The area before them shimmered, the scorched wasteland beginning to restore itself, trees regrowing and targets reappearing exactly where they had been before.

As if the devastation the fireball had left behind had been nothing more than a passing thought, the Rune priest gestured, bringing the Inheritance Polarity Star back into view.

"That," he began, "was *Perditio*. Very straightforward, very flashy. What it lacks in versatility, it makes up for in raw, destructive power. But now"—his gaze shifted back to Thea, his smirk returning—"let's get a bit more *cerebral*."

He pointed to the gem at the 1-o'clock position on the star, a dark green that seemed to shimmer with an almost sinister undertone.

"This," he continued, "is the second Inheritance a Psyker encounters within their Delve: *Discordia*. It represents the aspect of discord, strife, and dissension within the Void. Unlike *Perditio*, it's far less straightforward—subtle, insidious, and devastating in entirely different

ways. But much like most Inheritances, once you grasp its core principles, it's not difficult to understand."

He paused briefly, his eyes glinting as if a private joke had crossed his mind.

His chuckle was light, almost playful, before he carried on. "*Discordia* is universally represented by the color Dark Green. It's among the rarer Inheritances, at around 7.49% appearance rate. Its Psykers excel at Battlefield Control, particularly through manipulation of senses. Now, pay close attention to this distinction: *Discordia* doesn't hide or obscure the senses, as *Obscuritas* does. Instead, it bends them—distorts them completely. It changes what your senses *tell* you about the world around you, rather than simply erasing things from them."

Thea's brows furrowed slightly as she absorbed this. "Like... illusions, but more... invasive, in a way?" she ventured.

"Exactly," the Rune priest said with a nod, evidently pleased with her quick connection.

"*Discordia* Psykers are masters of illusions, but their approach isn't about making you *not* see something—it's about making you *see something else entirely*. Imagine a squad convinced their own comrades are enemies and turning on them. Or better yet, an entire unit tricked into firing on their own Faction. The chaos and mistrust this Inheritance can create is truly staggering."

His tone grew more serious as he continued, his gaze locking onto Thea's. "An unchecked *Discordia* Psyker is a *far* greater threat than most realize. While *Perditio* can definitely obliterate everything in its path, *Discordia* can tear apart entire armies from the inside, sowing discord and mistrust at scales far beyond what you'd think possible. If you ever face one, Thea, remember this: They don't rely on sheer power—they thrive on confusion, hesitation, and manipulation. And that makes them potentially even more dangerous than a rampant *Perditio* Psyker."

Thea nodded slowly as the Rune priest's words sank in.

It wasn't just the raw power that made these Inheritances dangerous—it was the intent and precision behind their application that turned them into terrifying tools of warfare.

Much like before, the Rune priest held out his right hand, and a small ball of fire appeared above it, gently hovering just beyond his reach. But this time, the flames were suffused with the same dark green hue as the *Discordia* gem on the Inheritance Polarity Star.

Thea's eyes narrowed as she realised immediately there was something wrong with them: The fire didn't move naturally at all.

Its flickering was unnervingly slow, almost hypnotic, as though the flames were caught in a viscous liquid. The odd, slow motion sent a chill through her, leaving her instinctively uneasy.

"Now," the Rune priest began, "much like *Aurae*, applying the *Discordia* Inheritance to something as straightforward and physical as a Fireball produces a rather... strange result."

He glanced at her, clearly gauging her reaction to the peculiar flame before him. “Let’s see how it behaves in practice, shall we?”

With a simple flick of his hand, the Rune priest directed the fireball toward the same target, thirty meters away.

This time, Thea braced herself, fully expecting the projectile to dart forward at the same bullet-like speed as the *Perditio* Fireball.

But as the fireball began its journey, she quickly realized she needn’t have bothered.

The *Discordia* Fireball moved slowly, unnaturally so—its trajectory precise and measured, almost as if it were stalking its target rather than simply flying toward it. She could swear that it moved *even* slower than the basic and *Aurae* Fireballs she had seen earlier.

Then, finally, the Fireball reached the target—and erupted.

But it wasn’t like any explosion Thea had ever seen before.

There was no flash of light, no violent burst of flames expanding outward.

Instead, the fireball seemed to collapse in on itself, drooping to the ground like molten liquid. When it hit the floor, Thea felt the ground beneath her feet tremble in a deep, resonating vibration from the sheer weight of it.

The mass of green fire spread outward rapidly, flowing across the ground in all directions like a tidal wave surging onto a shoreline.

Nearby trees began to burn almost instantly, their trunks blackening, creaking and splintering under the weight of the viscous flames.

The targets positioned within its reach fared even worse, however.

The liquid-fire didn’t simply burn through their armor—it melted it, the once-solid plating warping and dripping away like wax under intense heat. The bodies of the targets beneath the armor were crushed under the sheer weight of the liquid mass as they desperately tried to escape, before folding in on themselves like fragile paper dolls.

Thea’s breath hitched as the surreal scene unfolded before her.

The fire didn’t behave like any natural element at all; it was as if a portal had been torn open where the fireball had landed, spewing forth an endless torrent of glowing, green liquid destruction. The sheer volume of it seemed impossible, given the small size of the original fireball—an infinite-seeming cascade of green liquid-fire surging outward, flattening and burning everything it touched.

The surreal liquid didn’t simply consume its surroundings like a normal fire would—it *pushed*.

The weight of the fire was so immense, battering against the trees that it knocked them over like brittle twigs. The forest clearing was rapidly transformed into a nightmarish landscape of toppled trunks, molten, compressed armor, and crushed targets.

The sight was so strange, so utterly *alien* with what she knew about fire, that it left Thea frozen in stunned silence, unable to fully comprehend what she was even witnessing.

After a few seconds that felt like an eternity, the strange portal-like point where the fireball had “exploded” suddenly winked out of existence.

As abruptly as it had begun, the torrent of liquid-fire ceased, leaving the clearing eerily quiet.

Thea stared at the scene, her wide eyes reflecting the smoldering green glow that lingered faintly in the air. “What... what the fuck was *that*?” she finally managed to ask, her voice shaky.

The Rune priest, who had been watching the destruction unfold with an almost clinical fascination, turned to her with a faint smirk.

“That,” the Rune priest said, his tone calm yet laced with a subtle hint of pride, “was the true nature of *Discordia* when applied to the humble Fireball Power. *Discordia* takes the general rules you think you understand and flips them on their head. Fire begins to behave like a heavy liquid; air becomes solid; light turns to darkness. Because of this, *Discordia* is often called the ‘Opposite Inheritance.’ But don’t fall into the trap of thinking it simply reverses things—it’s far more nuanced than that. As you just saw, the fire still burns, it still melts—it just doesn’t behave in the way you’d expect. Its destructive properties remain, but the method is... altered.”

The Rune priest turned his attention away from her for a moment and raised his voice nonchalantly toward the Sovereign. “Reset the area.”

The clearing shimmered once more, the charred remnants of trees and crushed targets vanishing as the landscape returned to its pristine state. Without missing a beat, the Rune priest summoned the Inheritance Polarity Star back between them.

“Let’s move on to number three, shall we?” he said, gesturing toward the bright-green gem at the 2-o’clock position.

Thea nodded after a brief moment of collecting herself, though her hands remained lightly clasped in her lap to keep from fidgeting. The surreal power of the *Discordia* flames still lingered in her mind.

“The third Inheritance you will encounter,” the Rune priest began, his tone gaining a noticeable edge of sternness, “is the second rarest of them all. With only 5.12% of all Psykers exhibiting this one, it’s unlikely you’ll run into it often in the field. But don’t mistake rarity for weakness—it is no less powerful, and arguably even more dangerous because of its unpredictability.”

His finger hovered over the gem. “Universally represented by the colour Iridescent Green, this Inheritance is called *Mutatio*. It embodies the power of change and alteration within the

Void. Psykers of this Inheritance are often referred to as wild cards, and for very good reason. *Mutatio* doesn't have a defined focus or specialty. Instead, it works across the entire spectrum of Powers—illusions, destructive physical abilities, healing, and beyond—amplifying them in ways that are as unpredictable as the Inheritance itself.”

The Runepriest extended his hand, and above it appeared another fireball.

This one glowed with an Iridescent Green hue, its surface shifting and swirling like liquid venom. The flames danced unnaturally, licking outward like grasping tendrils that stretched far beyond what seemed physically possible; like it was more a living entity than a chemical reaction of some kind.

Thea's instincts screamed at her that this fireball was dangerous—thoroughly *bad news*.

Without even realizing it, she shifted back slightly in her chair, her muscles tensing in preparation to bolt if necessary.

The Runepriest noticed her reaction and chuckled approvingly.

“*Very good*. That's exactly the kind of reaction I'd hope for,” he said with a nod. “Stay as far away from hostile *Mutatio* Powers as you possibly can. They are not to be trifled with in *any* capacity.”

As if to emphasize his warning, he gestured for the *Mutatio* Fireball to begin its journey.

The green flame rippled unnaturally, shivering with eerie life before it abruptly lurched forward, its tendrils writhing and grasping in every direction like a predatory organism hunting for prey. The fireball moved with unadulterated chaos, its path erratic as if it had a will of its own, before finally reaching the target distance.

The moment it hit, the *Mutatio* Fireball erupted—not in a conventional explosion, but in a grotesque burst of mycelial-like tendrils spewing outward in every direction.

The tendrils extended erratically, twisting and contorting as they spread, their toxic-green flames licking hungrily at everything in their path. Each tendril moved as though alive, their chaotic motion making it impossible to predict where they would strike next.

Wherever the tendrils touched, the world *warped*.

Trees near the epicenter shuddered violently, their trunks swelling grotesquely as new growths emerged from the bark at unnatural speeds. Branches sprouted in jagged, chaotic patterns, twisting around each other like coiling serpents before bursting into toxic green flames. Leaves turned into strange, fleshy appendages that pulsed faintly with life for just a moment before they, too, were consumed by the ever-present fire.

The Stellar Republic Soldiers positioned around the clearing fared even worse.

The lighter-armored targets disintegrated almost immediately, their forms warping grotesquely for a brief moment as the flames consumed them. Those in medium armor

melted into twisted, half-formed shapes, their bodies mutating wildly before collapsing in on themselves.

Thea's horrified gaze, however, was locked onto one particular soldier clad in Ultra-Heavy armor. A tendril had lashed out and struck the marine's shoulder, and she watched, frozen in shock, as their body began to rapidly change.

The marine's limbs swelled grotesquely, their proportions becoming distorted as they grew larger and larger within the confines of their armor. The fire, while hot, wasn't anywhere close to the one that the *Perditio* Inheritance had created and thus, not enough to melt the thick plating of the Ultra-Heavy suit.

Instead, the body inside continued to grow unnaturally, the armored plates groaning under the increasing pressure.

A sickening *squelch* followed by the sharp *crack* of bones echoed through the clearing as the body inside finally succumbed, crushed by its own uncontrollable growth within the confines of the armor. The soldier slumped lifelessly to the ground, their mutated form slowly spilling out through cracks in the plating, leaving behind nothing but a nightmarish amalgam of flesh and metal.

The ground itself wasn't spared either.

Tendrils of green flame snaked along the earth, leaving behind a warped, corrupted landscape in their wake. The soil darkened and cracked, strange, toxic-green crystalline structures sprouting up from the ground like jagged teeth.

Patches of grass turned into pulsating, fleshy growths, emitting faint, unsettling noises that made Thea's skin crawl. The entire area around the explosion was transformed into a hellish tableau of grotesque, aberrant change—an unnatural fusion of life, death, and flame.

Thea sat frozen in her chair, her mind struggling to comprehend what she was witnessing, her stomach twisting as the sight of the grotesque mutations burned itself into her mind.

Her instincts screamed at her to get away throughout the entire, roughly ten-second-long conflagration of change, even though she knew the Rune priest's barrier kept her safe.

"*Mutatio*," the Rune priest said, his tone unnervingly calm, "is not an Inheritance of control. It is an Inheritance of chaos; of unrelenting change. It does not simply destroy—it corrupts, it transforms, and it overwhelms. You cannot predict what it will do; you can only react to its aftermath. That is its strength—and its danger."

Thea's voice caught in her throat as she stared, wide-eyed, at the warped remains of the clearing. Her gaze lingered on the shattered trees, the twisted earth, and the unrecognizable wreckage of the targets.

"How... how do you even fight something like that?" she finally managed to whisper, her voice trembling as she tore her eyes away from the corrupted scene to look at the Rune priest.

“With great care, Thea,” he replied, turning to her with a faint, knowing smile. “And from as far away as possible.”

Raising his voice slightly, enough to signal that his next words weren’t meant for her, he called out, “Reset the area.”

The clearing shimmered as the Sovereign responded to his command, the destruction vanishing as quickly as it had appeared. Trees regrew, the earth smoothed itself out, and the targets reassembled in their original positions, as though the chaos had never happened.

Turning back to Thea, the Rune priest’s tone softened slightly as he continued. “*Mutatio*, when given full reign over a Power, becomes completely unpredictable. Most *Mutatio* Psykers rarely, if ever, apply 100% of their Inheritance to any Power. Doing so makes the Powers dangerously volatile and prone to backfire in ways that are as horrifying as they are twisted. However...”

He gestured broadly with one hand, as though to encompass possibilities beyond her current understanding. “When applied with care and the proper Intent, *Mutatio* can achieve truly marvelous results. Some of the finest high-Tier Medics I’ve ever worked with were *Mutatio* Psykers. Their Inheritance, when channeled properly, allows them to heal injuries that would be impossible for almost anyone else to mend. But that same talent for repair is balanced by its capacity for deconstruction, as you’ve just seen.”

Thea’s expression shifted slightly, her fear tempered by a glimmer of curiosity. “So... it’s not just raw chaos, then? It can be *controlled*?”

The Rune priest nodded, his gaze steady. “Controlled, yes, but only by those who truly understand it. A *Mutatio* Psyker knows their Inheritance far better than anyone else ever could—they *have to*. So, keep an open mind when you encounter one of them. They may seem unpredictable, even dangerous, but their mastery of change is unparalleled. Never underestimate what they can do—good or bad.”

With a simple wave of his hand, the Inheritance Star shimmered back into view between them. The Rune priest pointed to the next position on the star, the 3-o’clock gem glowing with a radiant, golden hue.

“Let us continue,” he said, his tone steady as he shifted back into his teaching rhythm.

“We’ve only scratched the surface, and there’s many more Inheritances to cover...”