

Volume 2 - Chapter 88 - Showerthoughts

UHF PSYKER QUICK-REFERENCE CARD — FIELD EDITION

Issued by the UHF Marine Training Command, Psychic Warfare Division

Not for distribution outside Integrated personnel. Report misuse to your commanding officer.

INHERITANCES

An Inheritance is the lens through which a Psyker channels all of their Powers.

It is determined at the inception of the Soul, set at birth, and **cannot** be changed under any circumstances.

It colours, shapes, and fundamentally alters how any given *Power* behaves when used.

Each Inheritance has a direct Polarity—an opposing Inheritance that cancels and conflicts with it. When two Powers of opposing Inheritances meet at roughly equal energy levels, both are nullified entirely (Polarity Voiding).

Outside that range, the stronger simply overwhelms and consumes the weaker.

Listed below in order of Delve encounter, with Star position, colour, and approximate occurrence rate among all known Psykers:

1. **Perditio** — "Destruction" — Crimson Red — 13.23% — Star: 12 o'clock — Polarity: Creatio — The Battlefield Psyker Inheritance. *Amplifies scale, speed, and lethality of all offensive Powers. Favours direct, devastating application over nuance.*
2. **Discordia** — "Conflict" — Dark Green — 7.49% — Star: 1 o'clock — Polarity: Concordia — *Governs friction, disruption, and destabilization. Powers filtered through Discordia create chaos in systems, formations, and minds alike.*
3. **Mutatio** — "Change" — Iridescent Green — 5.12% — Star: 2 o'clock — Polarity: Permaneo — *Embodies transformation. Wildly unpredictable at full application; capable of extraordinary healing or horrifying deconstruction in equal measure. Demands mastery to control safely.*
4. **Aurae** — "Aura/Energy" — Radiant Gold — 16.67% (most common) — Star: 3 o'clock — Polarity: Nihilus — *The most versatile Inheritance. No singular specialty; functions adequately with any Power or Path. Excels in information gathering and general-purpose application. Jack of all trades.*
5. **Fames** — "Hunger" — Deep Amber — 5.86% — Star: 4 o'clock — Polarity: Comedo — *Governs unadulterated desire—to consume, experience, and absorb. One of two Inheritances (alongside Nihilus) that profoundly affects the Psyker's personality over*

time. Deeply primal.

6. **Obscuritas** — "Darkness" — Royal Purple — 9.86% — Star: 5 o'clock — Polarity: Veritas — *The Inheritance of concealment and deception. Powers filtered through Obscuritas become nearly impossible to detect. Excels at stealth, illusion, and misdirection.*
 7. **Creatio** — "Creation" — Night Blue — 3.25% (rarest) — Star: 6 o'clock — Polarity: Perditio — *The rarest known Inheritance. Governs the generation and construction of new forms, structures, and phenomena. Diametrically opposed to Perditio in every respect.*
 8. **Concordia** — "Harmony" — Cerulean Blue — 8.49% — Star: 7 o'clock — Polarity: Discordia — *Governs cohesion, synchronization, and stability. Powers under Concordia reinforce, unify, and strengthen existing structures—physical, mental, or systemic.*
 9. **Permaneo** — "Persistence" — Steel Grey — 9.12% — Star: 8 o'clock — Polarity: Mutatio — *Embodies endurance and immutability. Powers filtered through Permaneo resist change, reinforce existing states, and make the temporary permanent. The defensive counterpart to Mutatio's volatility.*
 10. **Nihilus** — "Absence" — Abyss Black — 7.22% — Star: 9 o'clock — Polarity: Aurae — *Represents entropy, negation, and the end of all things. Like Fames, profoundly affects the Psyker's personality—drawing them toward detachment, stillness, and an increasing longing for nothingness.*
 11. **Comedo** — "Consume" — Molten Orange — 7.66% — Star: 10 o'clock — Polarity: Fames — *Governs absorption and assimilation. Where Fames hungers outward, Comedo draws inward—taking energy, matter, and phenomena into itself. Functionally parasitic at higher levels.*
 12. **Veritas** — "Truth" — Luminous White — 5.90% — Star: 11 o'clock — Polarity: Obscuritas — *The Inheritance of unfiltered reality. Powers filtered through Veritas reveal what the Void understands to be fundamentally true. Excels at piercing deception, seeing through illusion, and accessing information as it actually is.*
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PATHS

Paths are where a Psyker's *Powers* actually come from.

A Psyker may pursue **one or more** Paths over their career via Delving.

Each Path provides specific Powers that are then filtered through the Psyker's Inheritance, producing unique results depending on the combination. Two Psykers on the same Path with different Inheritances will produce *fundamentally* different effects from the same base Power.

Paths are organized into the following top-level categories and their sub-domains:

PRIMAL — Elemental manipulation in its most direct forms.

- Earth · Fire · Ice · Water · Air · Light · Dark · Nature

ASTRO — Powers relating to stellar phenomena, spatial signals, and cosmic-scale interaction.

- Beacon · Thread · Echo · Veil

SPATIAL — Manipulation of space, position, and physical geometry.

- Translocation · Gravity · Geometrics

ENERGY — Direct manipulation of physical forces and energy states.

- Sonic · Barrier · Kinetic · Radiant · Plasma · Magnetism · Friction · Pressure

DIVINATION — Temporal perception, information retrieval, and predictive modelling.

- Short-Term Precognition · Mid-Term Precognition · Long-Term Precognition · Scrying · Augury · Lore Calling

BIOMANCY — Manipulation of biological systems and living matter.

- Hemomancy · Fleshcraft · Neuromancy · Vitakinesis · Toxicology · Plague Weaving

MENTALISM — Powers affecting the mind, perception, and consciousness.

- Telepathy · Illusions · Compulsion · Dreamwalking

ARCANE — Esoteric and highly specialized disciplines with no clean analogue.

- Runic Inscription · Psysculpting · Voidweaving

AURA — Powers that project, enhance, imbue, or shield through ambient energy fields.

- Augmentation · Warding · Projection · Imbuement · Resonance

TRANSMUTATION — Alteration of matter, state, and fundamental composition.

- Alchemy · Phase Weaving · Corruption · Purification

SUMMONING — Creation, binding, or calling of external entities and constructs.

- Entomancy · Constructs · Entity Binding · Companion Craft · Echo Summoning

*Note: This card is a **simplified field reference**. Interactions between Inheritances and Paths are complex, situational, and often unpredictable. Consult your assigned Psyker Warfare*

*Officer for operational guidance. Do **not** engage a Psyker of unknown Inheritance without informing your Superior Officer of their presence and without Null-Serums available.*

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[Excerpt from "UHF PSYKER QUICK-REFERENCE CARD — FIELD EDITION (Rev. 17)" — UHF Marine Training Command, Psychic Warfare Division, PFC 928]

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Thea was once again woken by the soft alarm chime from the Sovereign.

It was the next morning. The previous day had ended without too much further spectacle.

There had been a short squad meeting about Evelyne, with Corvus telling everyone to be careful around her—no specifics, but a promise that he'd put together a full dossier soon.

That alone had been enough to tell both Thea and Lucas—who had immediately and quietly agreed to not meet up with Evelyne again until said dossier and meeting was done—that this was not a small matter.

Karania had been pensive throughout, but had refused every single one of Thea's attempts to talk about what had happened during the last training session, or about Evelyne at all. She had retreated to her room shortly after, citing the need to catch up on her note-taking since she hadn't had a chance to do so after her Advanced Skill Training.

Grumbling, Thea had ended up taking advantage of Alpha Squad's training room instead—running a few rounds of CQC against Ela to burn off the frustration.

Ela had been more than happy to help on that front.

"I think you just need to give her time," Ela had said during one of their breaks, after listening to Thea's vent for a while. "Whatever is going on with Karania, I'm sure she'll figure it out. She's literally the smartest person on this squad. It'll be fine."

The training itself had gone about as well as Thea had expected.

Lots of deaths.

She'd landed a few hits on Isabella—nothing close to lethal or even particularly threatening, the Attribute gap between them still being too wide even with her Psychic Powers in play.

But that was fine for Thea.

She just needed practice with her Throatcutter for the upcoming Challenge, and fighting against someone like Ela—who had far superior Attributes for this kind of combat—was, in Thea's opinion, the best possible preparation for going up against Tiberius.

He would, after all, also have vastly superior CQC Attributes that she had—hard not to, at this point in the Integration cycle.

This morning, though, she couldn't quite settle into her usual routine.

She was *beyond* nervous.

Her next session with the Rune priest was only a few hours away now, and with it came the heavy, dangerous *thing* that had been hanging over her head ever since her risky question for Major Quinn.

'Today's the day,' she thought, standing under the shower, letting the hot, steamy water run down her pale skin, trailing pink streaks after it from the heat. *'I really hope the Major was right about this. And I really, **really** hope I have the right wording for this, so the Rune priest doesn't Zero me on the spot...'*

She paused on that thought for a second, then shook her head.

'He wouldn't. He's too interested in whatever he thinks I've got going on to throw it away over a bit of a heretical question...'

After around half an hour of simply letting herself turn pink and then red from the hot water, she finally shut the water off, stood in the steam for a moment longer than she needed to, then stepped out and reached for one of the fluffy white towels stacked neatly on the heated rack beside the large shower.

Easily one of her favourite small features of being an Alpha Squad member.

She'd overheard plenty of Marines from the less prestigious squads grumbling about their accommodations over the past few weeks—about how the towels they were given were thin and scratchy, how most of them just used the hot-air drying that was available in all the bathrooms—including the barracks ones and Thea's own—instead.

Thea had tried hot-air drying exactly *once*. Once had been more than enough for her.

'Definitely prefer the fluffy towel,' she thought, pressing it against her face for a second longer than was strictly necessary. *'So soft...'*

A small smile tugged at her lips despite the knot still tightening steadily in her chest.

She kept drying herself off, wringing her hair out with a second towel, going through the motions slowly—trying to let the routine carry her rather than the trepidation that was building behind it.

It didn't really work. But it was better than standing still and thinking.

She threw on her clothes—the casual UHF uniform today, in preparation for the meeting with the Rune priest—and crossed over to the mirror, pulling the bathroom stool up to the small vanity with a quiet drag against the floor. She got out the large make-up kit from where she'd been keeping it on the shelf to the left.

She was still working through the first datashard of tutorials and guides that had come with it—whoever had gifted it to her had put together an *absurdly* thorough set of step-by-step instructions for someone who had never touched any of this before in her life.

‘Whoever got me this... thank you,’ she thought, carefully setting out the first few items she'd need. *‘This is genuinely so damn invaluable for learning about this stuff.’*

She had barely even touched a tenth of the kit so far.

Most of it was still in its original packaging, neatly arranged in the case, waiting for her to get through enough of the tutorials to even know what half of it was for. But the basics she had down by now, she felt—foundation, a bit of colour work around the eyes, the setting spray that made everything stay in place through physical exertion.

Simple stuff. Enough to make her feel like she was getting *somewhere*, at least.

She picked up the first applicator, angled her face slightly, and lifted her eyes to the mirror.

Neon-violet eyes stared back down at her.

Thea flinched so hard that the applicator slipped between her fingers—she barely caught it before it hit the counter, her body dropping into a half-crouch on pure reflex, heart slamming against her ribs.

The face inside the mirror was hers.

Her hair, her features, her body—but the eyes were wrong.

They were a bright, burning violet that had absolutely no business being in her reflection, and the mouth beneath them was curved into a wicked smile that Thea had not put there.

“Hello, darling,” echoed a voice inside her own head—warm, amused, and far, *far* too familiar for her liking.

"W—What are you d—"

“Shhh.” Aeth cut her off, one finger pressed to her lips, annoyance flickering across the mirrored face. *“Think, Thea! The Sovereign can hear your voice, but it cannot read your mind. We went over how dangerous it is to trust the brass last time, did we not?”*

Still reeling from the ambush, Thea slowly straightened up and lowered herself onto the stool, pressing one hand flat against her chest as if that would do anything to calm the hammering underneath it.

She was probably never going to get used to this thing just showing up like that.

“Right... What are you doing here?” She pushed the thought outward deliberately—not speaking, not simply thinking, but something in between.

It was strange, communicating like this.

It felt a bit like talking to Corvus through his [Direct Communication], except more intimate.

Like shouting into a room that was also somehow inside her own skull.

"Making sure you are not doing anything stupid today, of course," Æht replied immediately, rolling her eyes as she leaned back in the mirror and settled into a seated position—as if there were a throne behind her, which there very clearly was not. *"You are going to ask the Runepriest about whatever you discussed with Major Quinn, yes?"*

Thea considered, briefly, whether lying was worth the hassle. But Æht would find out what she was doing in a few hours regardless, so there wasn't much point.

Then again—this was Æht. Some kind of... *thing*, living inside her own head, that she still had no real way of categorizing.

'Is she an enemy? An ally? I have no idea. She hasn't done anything bad to me yet, as far as I can tell, but...'

It was still hard to trust her. *Genuinely* hard.

"I will," Thea finally replied, turning back toward the mirror and doing her best to start applying her make-up with steady hands.

For all of Æht's faults—and there were many—she had a point about the Sovereign monitoring her at all times. Thea was risking quite a lot today, and there was no reason to accidentally trigger some kind of investigation into her mental state that might derail everything by talking to herself out loud.

"What is the question you will ask—the request you have?" Æht's head tilted in that way it often did, just a fraction too far to one side, past the point where a normal neck should have stopped. *"What is it that is worth risking our very lives for, darling? Have you thought this all the way through? Is this truly the only way?"*

Thea paused briefly, applicator half-raised.

Not because Æht didn't know—she had never spoken the request out loud or written it down anywhere, which confirmed, at least in part, that the thing inside her head didn't have free access to all of her thoughts and memories.

'That's very good to know, at least...'

No, what had actually caught her off guard was the *tone*.

Æht didn't sound *annoyed*.

Nor did she sound pushy or condescending or any of the other things Thea had come to expect from her by now. The first question sounded like *genuine* curiosity—and the ones that followed it sounded like she was actually trying to help.

Like she was offering a perspective, not demanding compliance for once.

"I've thought about your words. From the last time we spoke," she began, keeping her hands steady on the applicator as best she could. "And... I agree with them. I have been lax with my paranoia. So I intend to fix that. I'll trust somebody—but I need to offer trust first, to get the opportunity for it in return. That's what the question will be about. And... no. I don't see any other way. I've thought about it ever since that DM. Because you were right."

She hated admitting to all of that. But it was the truth—and something inside her had always preferred the truth to outright lies, unless the lie was necessary.

Æht, meanwhile, simply watched her through the mirror. Which... actually made applying make-up really, *genuinely* difficult, because her reflection was not actually reflecting *her*.

It was being used by the thing inside her head to have a conversation.

"I can't actually do my make-up like this," she added, a bit quieter than before.

She didn't want to make Æht angry—she still had no real understanding of what the thing even was or what she was capable of. But as far as Thea could tell, Æht was just as invested in staying off the Sovereign's radar as she was.

"Hmm," Æht replied then, as if she hadn't even thought about that fact before. She rose from her invisible throne, drifted forward toward the mirror's surface, and considered the problem for a moment. *"I can see how that would indeed be quite difficult."*

A second later, Æht started mirroring her movements.

Perfectly. One to one, *exactly* the way a proper reflection should.

*'Oh, fuck... Okay, that's—that's **so much** fucking worse. That is so damn creepy...'*

Thea tried to focus on applying the first layer, but watching Æht's hands approach her own face—well, Thea's mirrored face, which was Æht's face, technically, but looked like Thea's face except for the eyes—

A shiver ran down her spine and stayed there.

"I am glad to hear you have considered my words carefully, darling," Æht said, ignoring Thea's discomfort entirely, matching every movement without a single frame of delay. *"It was about time you grew up. Perhaps we can actually move forward and start growing stronger together, then."*

Thea raised an eyebrow at that.

Æht raised one too. Perfectly mirrored.

"What do you mean?"

Æht rolled her eyes—but otherwise didn't move. It was deeply unsettling to watch her own eyes do that when her actual vision hadn't changed at all.

"It does not matter. The only thing that matters is that you are taking this seriously, darling. And that you have truly thought this through. We are in no rush. If you need more time to consider the potential consequences of what you are trying to do, then we can postpone. We have infinite time—the Allbright System will provide us with biological immortality in just a few short years. Do not risk this unless you are certain it is the only chance we have."

*'I'm not really doing it for **us**... Just me,'* Thea thought, keeping the words firmly inside her own head and nowhere near the push. *'I can't trust you, creature. How can you just assume that I would...? I don't understand you at all.'*

"If I—we—intend on getting stronger at an appropriate pace... then yes. This is the only option I see," she replied after a moment.

She had genuinely thought about little else in the past few weeks—ever since Æht's words had rattled her during that last DM. She needed to start getting actual ground underneath her fett, needed to figure out what the fuck was actually going on with her.

And all of that started with whether the Rune priest would agree to her request or not.

Æht, meanwhile, kept watching her closely—her neon-violet eyes tracking Thea's own movements inside the mirror, which looked deeply strange given that Thea was also trying to apply make-up at the same time.

"Very well, then. I will trust you on this, darling," Æht said with a nod, that almost made Thea smear make-up across her own face. *"I know how smart you can be, when you **actually** try. And it seems like you are finally taking this appropriately seriously."*

Thea's hands stopped moving entirely.

She had expected a lot of responses. That was not one of them.

"Do not be so surprised," Æht clicked her mirrored tongue. *"I do not believe you an imbecile. You are me, remember? I am you. If you were an imbecile, so would I be—and that, of course, is simply not possible."*

She sighed heavily, *"The problem I have with you, darling, has **never** been your intelligence. It is that you are blind, and you have been stumbling about like a child. This version of you, however? Right now? You seem serious. And that is all I have ever asked of you."*

Before Thea could even begin to formulate a reply, Æht continued.

"I will disappear now and hide. The Rune priest cannot be allowed to perceive me or know of my existence. Not yet. Do not tell him, Thea. It is for both our sakes. We will tell him one day—when we have confirmed that he is trustworthy. Not a moment before."

Her expression shifted, just slightly—something almost vulnerable moving beneath the surface before it was buried again.

"Once you have finished the session, call me. I will return, and we will speak about what you have learned. I hope that you are correct in your assumption that the Rune priest will not want us dead... I truly hope so, darling."

She sighed once more, and it almost sounded—inside Thea's head—like the entire weight of the galaxy was on her shoulders as she did so.

*"I will fight for you—for us. With **everything** I have... Just like I always have. But we are no match for the Rune priest. Nor Major Quinn. Nor many of the other Marines aboard this ship. So we **must** tread carefully, at every single step. Do **not** get us killed, darling."*

And before Thea could ask her to wait—before she could say anything at all—the eyes in the mirror shifted back to their natural, self-illuminating cyan.

'What...? W—Why is she like this?'

She stared at the cyan eyes in the mirror for a long moment, then let out a slow breath and picked the applicator back up.

The rest of the make-up routine went smoother than expected, now that her face was actually doing the things it was supposed to inside the mirror.

Her hands were also quite a bit steadier than they'd been before Æht had shown up, actually, which didn't make *any* sense.

She had just been ambushed in her own bathroom mirror by the *thing* living inside her head, and somehow she felt more settled now than she had when she'd woken up.

She noticed it while blending the foundation along her jawline.

The tight knot in her chest—the one that had been building since yesterday's run-in with the Rune priest, coiling tighter with every passing hour as the session approached—had loosened. Like something had somehow shifted.

'Is it because she approved of my intent...?'

The thought arrived before she could stop it, and she didn't like the shape of it at all.

*'No. That's not it. That **can't** be it. I don't care what the monster inside my head thinks about my decisions. That's fucking insane. I'm just more focused on her now than I am on worrying about the Rune priest, probably. That's all it is. She showed up and redirected my attention, and now the anxiety has somewhere else to go...'*

That sounded far more logical. And far more *right*.

She decided to believe it, finished the last of the eye work—still only the basics, she was maybe three tutorials deep into the datashard at best, as they were truly extensive—and checked herself in the mirror one final time.

Cyan eyes stared back. Just cyan and nothing else.

'Good.'

She cleaned up, stowed the kit, and headed out.

The Alpha Squad common room was quiet when she arrived—just Lucas at the table with a mug of something steaming, and Desmond across from him, halfway through a fairly sizable plate of eggs that almost made Thea want to ask, but ultimately decided against it.

No Karania, however.

Thea clocked the absence immediately and felt the familiar prickle of frustration settle behind her ribs. They usually ate breakfast together. The fact that Kara wasn't here—*again*—felt less like coincidence and more like a pattern she was being deliberately excluded from.

'*She's still avoiding me...*'

She pushed it aside.

She didn't have energy to worry about that now.

"Where's everyone else?" she asked, sliding into the seat next to Lucas with a plate of freshly made pancakes courtesy of the food printer.

"Corvus and Ela left about twenty minutes ago," Lucas said. "Didn't say where. Corvus had that look on his face, though—the one where he's working on something and doesn't want to be asked about it."

"The dossier, probably," Thea muttered.

Lucas shrugged and Desmond gave her a flat look but didn't push it.

Instead, he pointed his fork at her. "So. Psychic 101 today, eh?"

"For you guys, yeah."

"Finally going to get at least a *basic* understanding of what the actual fuck you're even doing out there," he grumped. "Because, honestly? Watching you do Psychic stuff without *any* kind of frame of reference for what's even happening is *deeply* unsettling—and straight up fucking insane."

That actually made her chuckle.

"Take good notes for me," she said in between two bites. "I won't be there—Rune priest's got me in Training Hall E-31 instead. And I haven't seen Kara yet this morning, so I can't ask her either."

Desmond visibly cringed at the mention of the Rune priest. "Right. Yeah. I remember him saying that, in the corridor."

He rubbed at the back of his neck, his expression souring. "I very much remember *everything* about that encounter, actually. Thanks for bringing it up..."

"He didn't do it on purpose," Thea offered, a piece of pancake on the fork she pointed at him. "... I'm *pretty sure*, at least."

Desmond let out a long sigh, then shrugged. "He did it anyway, though. A man like that—someone *that* powerful—should know what kind of effect he has on the world around him. There's no way he doesn't."

Thea couldn't really argue with that.

Lucas, however, hummed quietly from beside her.

"None of us can really begin to understand someone like the Rune priest," he said, his tone measured. "The man is clearly *beyond* ancient. He's so far above anything we've ever encountered that even the strongest Battlefield Aces we could possibly run into wouldn't even register to him. We're ants to him. *At best*... Would *you* watch out for every ant on the ground while you walked?"

"We're not ants, though," Desmond said, frowning. "We're the *same species*."

"Are we, to him?" Lucas replied, and the question sat there for a moment. "At a certain point, the difference between species and the difference in power become the same thing. It might be *technically* true that we're all human. But for someone at his level, that might be more of a technicality than an actual reality."

The table went quiet.

That, more than anything Æht had said this morning, put Thea right back on the worry-train about what was coming.

Because Lucas wasn't wrong at all—he rarely was, when he actually spoke up about something.

The Rune priest had never given any indication that he cared about anyone's life but his own.

And not even that, really—with his demeanour, it seemed more like he'd absolutely be willing to risk his own life without hesitation, as long as it meant he wasn't *bored*.

Which was probably even more dangerous than if he simply cared exclusively about his own survival.

'I just have to hope that I'm truly interesting enough for him to consider me worthwhile...'