

# DRUSIAN CHARLATAN

*"We wretched souls here on the frontier of the Imperium are all but lost as we face unspeakable horrors, unfathomable temptations, and threats to our very humanity. It is only by the merciful vigilance of Saint Drusus that we are brought safely through the storm."*

—'Sister' Styliane, relic peddler in Footfall

In the Expanse, there are those who would use the faith of their fellow man to earn their way. These individuals do not do so in return for the spiritual health of their charges, as true members of the Ecclesiarchy do, but rather they are frauds, cheats, and swindlers. These Charlatans make their living selling false relics of the revered Saint Drusus as talismans against the darkness, cures for mortal illness, and charms to ward off misfortune. The people of the Expanse and the neighbouring Calixis Sector are as devout as any in the Imperium of Man and those who are willing to abuse this devotion for their own ends can make a good deal of profit. Indeed, the common man of the Expanse is far more devout than he is discerning or learned and millennia of constant missionaries' sermons has made the populace prone to believe those who claim some level of Ecclesiarchical authority.

As a frontier of Imperial expansion, the Koronus Expanse is subject to all manner of threats, and life beyond the Maw is fraught with terror. The threat of xenos attack, the depredations of Chaos, and the very environment itself can all prey on the minds and souls of the weak-willed. It is from these horrors that the Drusian Charlatan offers succour. With only a brief exchange of words, a Charlatan can gather what it is that his mark fears most and provide to him, for a modest fee of course, the object sure to ward off that particular evil. These relics are never the genuine article, as might be expected, but it is the art of the Charlatan to convince his victim otherwise.

There are those who might consider the actions of a Drusian Charlatan petty in comparison to "grand" crimes such as the Cold Trade or piracy. Those individuals underestimate the importance of the Ecclesiarchy in the everyday lives of most humans in the Expanse. Beyond the bounds of the Maw, faith is often one of the few ties humanity has to the Imperium, and Charlatans prey directly on those ties. In addition, the skills learned selling trinkets and talismans can evolve into much larger cons and vast riches.

Charlatans of the Expanse pay particularly close attention to the unparalleled devotion Calixians have towards their patron General-Saint. A figure as universally well known and as accessible as Drusus makes him an easy tool in a Charlatan's scheme. Within the Calixis Sector and the Koronus Expanse, reverence of Saint Drusus is so prevalent and the battlegrounds of the Angevin Crusade are so ubiquitous that it is not hard for the common man to believe that the scorched chunk of plasteel he is offered is a chip from the armour of Saint Drusus himself

or that the jaw-bone he just bought once belonged to the Saint's personal servo-skull. As the footsteps of Saint Drusus are scattered throughout the Calixis Sector and the Expanse, it is the rare system that doesn't already claim some notable connection to the Saint. This makes the collection of relics a particularly easy one for Drusian Charlatans, as any bit of battlefield wreckage, mortal remains of men, archaic prayer sheets, or the like can easily be made to appear connected with Saint Drusus, from his time in whatever system, or on whatever station or planet the Charlatan happens to be working.

Given the abuses of Ecclesiarchs throughout the Imperium's millennia-spanning history, learned men are often wary of the sort of people willing to pervert faith for their own ends. Charlatans often receive a great deal of suspicion from



TABLE 2-3: DRUSIAN CHARLATAN ADVANCES

Advance	Cost	Type	Prerequisites
Barter	200	Skill	
Barter +10	200	Skill	Barter
Blather	200	Skill	
Blather +10	200	Skill	Blather
Charm	200	Skill	
Charm +10	200	Skill	Charm
Commerce	200	Skill	
Common Lore (Ecclesiarchy)	200	Skill	
Common Lore (Imperial Creed)	200	Skill	
Deceive	200	Skill	
Disguise	200	Skill	
Evaluate	200	Skill	
Performer (Preacher)	200	Skill	
Scholastic Lore (Ecclesiarchy)	200	Skill	
Secret Tongue (Ecclesiarchy)	200	Skill	
Sleight of Hand	200	Skill	
Scrutiny	300	Skill	
Deceive +10	400	Skill	Deceive
Scrutiny +10	400	Skill	Scrutiny
Cold Reading	500	Talent	
Master Orator	600	Talent	Fel 30
Polyglot	600	Talent	Int 40, Fel 30
Hard Bargain	750	Talent	

these sorts, who are apt to see their base manipulations as the first steps towards greater heresy. Likewise, lawkeepers, most often planetary enforcers in the Expanse, keep a watchful eye on the activities of Charlatan peddlers, though their authority usually restricts their prosecutions to legal infractions. This is not to say, however, that enforcers are not perfectly willing to hand the fraudsters over to the agents of the Ecclesiarchy.

Charlatans are clearly not the only type of con artist in the Expanse. Traditional swindlers, working their frauds, wander throughout the Expanse, cheating backwater frontier citizens and savvy politicians alike. These secular frauds often implement schemes that rely on more profitable methods than selling false relics or cures, though their arts rarely endanger the souls of their marks. A charismatic double-crossing mercenary, a fast-talking kidnapper in the guise of a chartist pilot, or a psyker using his sight to proclaim false visions, each of these utilise the same sort of strategies and schemes for their profit as the Drusian Charlatan.

## BECOMING A DRUSIAN CHARLATAN

One decides to become a Charlatan of Drusus the moment he decides that his own profit is worth abusing the common folk of their faith, and not before. Perhaps the Charlatan-to-be never had much use for faith in the first place or perhaps he was a former man of the cloth embittered by long years of calamity and misfortune in the Expanse. Regardless, at the moment they become a Charlatan, the Explorer has stepped out of the light of the Emperor and must forever guard his actions against the paranoid eye of the Ecclesiarchy, for fear of their righteous persecution. They work beyond the sight of the Ecclesiarchy and their actions are counter to that illustrious

organisation, turning them into bitter cynics seeking to bilk the faithful, honest citizens of the Imperium for their own ends.

**Required Career:** Any except Explorator, Kroot, or Ork  
**Alternate Rank:** 1 or Higher (5,000 xp)

**Other Requirements:** One of the following Skills (Barter, Blather, Charm, Commerce, or Scrutiny) or the Enemy (Ecclesiarchy) or Rival (Ecclesiarchy) Talent. The Explorer must have a Fellowship of 35. To become a Drusian Charlatan, the Explorer must have profited directly from the sale of false relics, prayers, cures, or other miracle workings.

**Special:** Drusian Charlatans automatically receive the Talent Enemy (Ecclesiarchy) if they do not already have it.

## COLD READING (TALENT)

**Requirements:** Blather +10, Scrutiny +10.

Utilising a combination of fast-talking and body language interpretation, the Charlatan can quickly assess attentive crowds and potential customers. Preying on the fears and superstitions of the populace, the Charlatan draws his crowds into unwittingly telling him exactly what it is they believe will save them from the horrors of everyday life in the Expanse.

Prior to making a Commerce, Barter, or Charm Test, the Charlatan may make a Blather Test opposed by the target's Willpower or Scrutiny. If the Blather Test is a success, the Charlatan has hooked the target into giving up some vital information and the Charlatan may then make a Challenging (+0) Scrutiny Test to assess the importance of the information gained. If successful, the Charlatan gains a +5 bonus to his next Commerce, Barter, or Charm Test against the target for each point of Perception Bonus. He has ascertained information about the target, which will aid him in his pitch, negotiations, or diplomacy.