

# DARK HERESY



CORE RULEBOOK



Totus laus immortalis Imperator super suis rutilus per ~ Rex pro ebino

Spina

Horior in Suis muneris est scio eternus bifa

Kimward

Fides non Alienus, Veneritum, Veneritum

Astronomicon habum rector nos per le... Imperator misericordia

trains

# THE HALO STARS





Quæritur quid sit iussor summum

Conward

Perissusum flamma existo sentio ~ Veritas

Imperial College London, London, UK



# DARK HERESY



ROLEPLAYING IN THE GRIM  
DARKNESS OF THE 4<sup>TH</sup> MILLENNIUM

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# It is the 41<sup>st</sup> Millennium...

*For more than a hundred centuries the Emperor has sat immobile on the Golden Throne of Earth. He is the master of mankind by the will of the gods, and master of a million worlds by the might of his inexhaustible armies. He is a rotting carcass worshipping invisibly with power from the Dark Age of Technology. He is the Carrion Lord of the Imperium for whom a thousand souls are sacrificed every day, so that he may never truly die.*

*Yet in his deathless state, the Emperor continues his eternal vigilance. Mighty battlefleets cross the Daemon-infested miasmas of the warp, the only route between distant stars, their way lit by the Astronomicon, the psychic manifestation of the Emperor's will. Dust armies give battle in his name on uncounted worlds. Greatest amongst his soldiers are the Adeptus Astartes, the Space Marines, bio-engineered super-warriors. Their comrades in arms are legion: the Imperial Guard and countless planetary defence forces, the ever-vigilant Inquisition and the Tech-Priests of the Adeptus Mechanicus, to name but a few. But for all their multitudes, they are barely enough to hold off the ever-present threat from aliens, heretics, mutants—and worse.*

*To be a man in such times is to be one amongst untold billions. It is to live in the cruellest and most bloody regime imaginable. Forget the power of technology and science, for so much has been forgotten, never to be re-learned. Forget the promise of progress and understanding, for in the grim darkness of the far future, there is only war. There is no peace amongst the stars, only an eternity of carnage and slaughter, and the laughter of thirsting gods.*



# THE WAR FOR THE SOUL OF MANKIND

**W**ELCOME TO DARK HERESY, a roleplaying game full of danger, mystery and brutal violence, set in the decaying far future of *Warhammer 40,000*. You are about to embark on perilous adventures into the dark heart of the 41st Millennium. You stand on the front line of a great and secret war. As an Acolyte of the powerful Inquisition, you will root out threats to the Imperium of Man. You will engage in deadly combat against heretics, aliens and witches. You will face Daemonic possession, and battle for your very survival amidst a web of conspiracy and betrayal. But perhaps the biggest threat you face is your fellow man, for the human soul is such fertile ground for corruption. It is your duty to shepherd mankind from the manifold paths of damnation, with a smoking boltgun if necessary.

Do not shrink from your noble calling, hard as it might be. Desperate times call for desperate measures, and these are the darkest times that humanity has ever known. The Imperium is beset by enemies, both from within and without. It is up to you to stand tall and make a difference.

## WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

Right about now you might be wondering just how a roleplaying game works, and what you need to jump into the action. Excellent. Such inquisitiveness is the mark of a fine Acolyte (of course, surviving what your curiosity uncovers is another). Well, rest assured, not only is roleplaying fun and exciting, it is also very easy to learn. This book contains all the rules and information you need to get started—so you're already halfway there. Of course, if you are merely reading this book in your local gaming store or bookshop, you should buy it immediately. Not only will it be a sign of your extremely good taste, you'll also be able to introduce your friends to a whole new world of compelling gaming.

You may well have already played a roleplaying game (or RPG) on your computer or games console, or indeed our companion hobby game, *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*. If you haven't, what you basically need to know is that a roleplaying game allows you and your friends to take the role of a hero at the centre stage of a dramatic story. You get to pick what your heroes, or Player Characters (PCs), get to do. From what they say, to how they fight and what they look like, you and your friends get to shape the action.

In concept, this all might seem rather chaotic. How is the story told? How do you decide what happens? What do you do if you and your friends disagree? That's where this book comes in. *Warhammer 40,000 Roleplay* presents you with the rules of play, and describes the dark and gothic world of the 41st Millennium. This book explains how to create your character, how to blast down aliens, how to uncover heretical secrets, and much more.

Before you can begin, you and your roleplaying group have to make an important decision: who is going to be the Game Master? The Game Master (referred to as the GM) is the referee and the lead storyteller, the person in charge of running the game. The GM does not play as others do; instead, he or she presents the stories and situations, describes the wonders and perils of the galaxy, plays other characters and adjudicates the rules. The GM is the most important member of your group, so choose wisely. The GM ought to be fair-minded, well spoken and imaginative. An eye for detail is also helpful.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY DARK HERESY

When you're ready to start playing DARK HERESY, you'll need the following items:

- This rulebook
- Three or more people to play the game
- A quiet place to play (around a table is ideal)
- Three or four hours of gaming time
- Some ten-sided dice (two or more per player)
- Paper
- Pencils and an eraser
- Snacks, drinks, etc

You should be able to find ten-sided dice in the shop where you bought this book, or failing that, there are many internet stores that sell these dice in a variety of different colours and finishes. If you have access to a photocopier you may like to copy the character sheet at the back of this book for each of your group to use, though this isn't essential. (You can also download free printable character sheets from our website at [www.blackindustries.com](http://www.blackindustries.com).)

To help visualise the action, you may wish to use suitable miniatures to represent your characters and enemies during combat. Games Workshop's own Citadel range of *Warhammer 40,000* miniatures are ideal for this task. See [www.games-workshop.com](http://www.games-workshop.com) for more details and nearest stockists.



If you are the GM, you need to know the rules of this book quite well. You can learn more about your job in **Chapter VIII: The Game Master**, and you may head there now if you wish. If you have already played *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* you will find much of **DARK HERESY** familiar, but be aware that a few important details of the rules differ from that game.

If you are intending to be a player, keep reading. The next chapter will guide you through the process of creating your alter ego in the 41st Millennium. In less than half an hour, you can be ready to play. If you'd like to know a little more about the setting of **DARK HERESY**, have a read through **Chapter IX: Life in the Imperium** and **Chapter X: The Inquisition**.

If you're still not clear on what roleplaying is, be sure to read the **Example of Play** on page 10. This description illustrates what a game is like.

## WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

**DARK HERESY** is divided into thirteen chapters. They are:

### INTRODUCTION

The section you are reading right now. It provides an overview of **DARK HERESY** and roleplaying in general.

### CHAPTER I: CHARACTER CREATION

This chapter takes you step by step through the process of creating your character for the game.

### CHAPTER II: CAREER PATHS

Career Paths are the building blocks of your character. They both describe what you did before you became an Acolyte and your role within your investigative group. This chapter details all the various Career Paths, and also explains how you can improve and develop your character through game play.

### CHAPTER III: SKILLS

From Interrogation to Tech-Use, every character has a variety of learned skills that they can employ. This chapter describes them all in detail.

### CHAPTER IV: TALENTS

Whether it's Bulging Biceps or Unshakeable Faith, every character also has certain special abilities that make them unique. This chapter describes all of these talents.

### CHAPTER V: ARMOURY

This chapter describes some of the tools, trappings, weapons and armour your Acolyte may use or encounter.

### CHAPTER VI: PSYCHIC POWERS

From firing bolts of pyrokinetic flame or issuing telepathic commands, Emperor-gifted Psychic Powers are rare and dangerous. This chapter explains how they work and what happens when they go wrong.



## CHAPTER VII: PLAYING THE GAME

In *DARK HERESY* you will be forced to fight for your life against a variety of heretical foes, and this chapter tells you how to do it. It also tells you how to make Skill Tests, spend Fate Points and perform other rules-related actions.

## CHAPTER VIII: THE GAME MASTER

The GM has a special role to play in any roleplaying game and this chapter explains how to take it on. In addition to advice on how to run a *DARK HERESY* game and how to be a good Game Master, it also contains rules for corruption and experience.

## CHAPTER IX: LIFE IN THE IMPERIUM

This chapter describes the Imperium of the 41st Millennium in all its decaying, war-torn glory.

## CHAPTER X: THE INQUISITION

In *DARK HERESY* you take on the role of an Acolyte of the Inquisition. This chapter provides key background details about the mysterious organisation of the Inquisition.

## CHAPTER XI: THE CALIXIS SECTOR

The Calixis Sector is the core setting for *DARK HERESY*. This chapter provides an overview of the sector and then zooms in on three key planets. This should give the GM plenty of material to work with when running games.

## CHAPTER XII: ALIENS, HERETICS & ANTAGONISTS

The galaxy is fraught with all manner of deadly creatures, and this chapter provides background and game stats for various adversaries that can be found in the Calixis Sector.

## CHAPTER XIII: ILLUMINATION

Illumination is an introductory adventure that GMs can use to kick off their *DARK HERESY* campaigns. Be warned though—this chapter is for GMs only and should not be read by the players.



### READING AND ROLLING THE DICE

*Warhammer 40,000 Roleplay: DARK HERESY* contains everything you need to get started except dice. Ten-sided dice (d10) are the only type of dice you need to play *DARK HERESY*. Everyone will need access to at least two d10s, preferably of two different colours.

Just like in a boardgame or table-top wargame, dice are used to inject an element of chance into *DARK HERESY*.

As you read through this book, you'll discover that there are various ways you can use your dice to produce results. The most common use of dice is the percentage roll (abbreviated to d% or d100). This roll produces a number between 1 and 100. To make a percentage roll, you'll need two ten-sided dice. Choose one to indicate the "tens" and the other to indicate the "units". You'll probably find it useful to have dice of different colours to differentiate between them. Roll the dice and observe the results. The "tens" die forms the first digit of your result, whilst the "units" die gives you the last digit of your result.

**Example:** Steve makes a percentage roll. His "tens" die shows an 8 whilst his "units" die shows a 6. Thus, Steve has rolled 86.

Sometimes you will be asked to roll a number of dice and add the results together. In these cases the number of dice you need to roll are clearly written before the d10 abbreviation. For example, 2d10 requires two ten-sided dice to be rolled and added together; 4d10 requires four dice to be rolled and totalled, and so on.

**Example:** Steve wants to find out the amount of damage done by his lascannon. He needs to roll 5d10. He picks up five ten-sided dice and rolls them. He gets a 3, 4, 7, 7 and a 2. He adds these together to get 23 (3 + 4 + 7 + 7 + 2 = 23).

Finally, on some occasions you will need to create a number between 1 and 5. This is known as rolling a five-sided die, or d5. Though you can get actual five-sided dice, you can easily create the same effect by rolling a d10 and halving the result, rounding any fractions up.

**Example:** Steve's character has been knocked unconscious for 45 hours. Steve rolls 1d10. He gets a 7 and halves this to get a result of 4 (7 ÷ 2 = 3.5; Rounded up, this is 4). Unfortunately, Steve's character will now be comatose for 4 hours.

## AN EXAMPLE OF PLAY

If you are new to roleplaying, you may still be unclear on how it all works. What follows is an example of play. It doesn't explain the rules of the game (that comes later), but it does show the basics of roleplaying and the Game Master's job in setting the scene, relating what the players discover as they explore and interpreting the rules.

In this example, Jez is the Game Master. Lyra is playing Amosis Tem, an assassin trained by one of the Imperium's many noble houses. Rick is playing Vilmos Palvi, an Imperial Guardsman from Naval Security. Will is playing Sylus Ozdemir, an Adept from the Scrivener's Star of Prol IX. Steve is playing Lazaro Uridar, an Adeptes Arbitres Arbitrator. The four Player Characters are all Acolytes serving under Inquisitor Hastor Whitlocke of Ordo Xenos. They have been sent to a research station on the fringes of the Calixis Sector to investigate a bizarre astropathic communication that Inquisitor Whitlocke received from an agent (Tomas) on the station...

**Jez [GM]:** You have yet to find a living soul on the research station. No one greeted you in the landing bay. No one guarded the entryway. No one has appeared in the shadowy, vaulted halls. Now you're approaching what you think is the command centre. What do you want to do?

**Rick [Vilmos]:** I'll sweep the corridor, shotgun ready.

**Lyra [Amosis]:** When I get the hand-sign from Vilmos, I'll approach the door and see if I can open it.

**Steve [Lazaro]:** "Sylus, you and I should hang back and cover them."

**Will [Sylus]:** "Agreed."

**Jez [GM]:** Okay. Vilmos, you sweep the corridor and find no threats. Amosis, you get up to the door and discover it's security locked.

**Lyra [Amosis]:** Thought so. I'll use my Security skill to try to open it.

Lyra rolls a Security Skill Test.

**Lyra [Amosis]:** I passed my test.

**Jez [GM]:** That's good enough, the lock was not hard to override. The rusting door slides open to reveal the command centre. The first thing you notice is that there's a lot of blood in here. Then the stench hits you like a blow to the face. The source of the smell and the blood soon becomes clear. There are three bodies inside the command centre.

**Lyra [Amosis]:** "Emperor preserve us..."

**Rick [Vilmos]:** Any enemies?

**Jez [GM]:** Not that you can see.

**Will [Sylus]:** I'll examine the bodies and check for survivors.

**Steve [Lazaro]:** I'll see if I can access the station's data logs. "Vilmos, cover us."

**Rick [Vilmos]:** "But of course. You don't want me fooling with the machinery."

**Lyra [Amosis]:** "No, we certainly don't. Weapons and cogitators don't mix."

**Jez [GM]:** Amosis is right, as is evident from the ruined

cogitators. They weren't shot, but something smashed them to pieces. As for the crew, there are no survivors.

**Will [Sylus]:** Whitlocke said there might be renegade Eldar in the area. I've seen wounds caused by their foul weapons before. Can I tell if this is what killed the crew?

**Jez [GM]:** Good question. Make a Medicine Test.

Will rolls a Medicine Skill Test.

**Will [Sylus]:** I made it—just!

**Jez [GM]:** Good work. You can easily tell that these wounds were not caused by alien weaponry. Two of the corpses seem to have been slashed by a close-combat weapon or maybe some kind of sharp claw. The third corpse is headless. It appears as if his head exploded.

**Will [Sylus]:** A bolter shell maybe? They explode inside their targets.

**Jez [GM]:** You don't think so. There'd at least be some head left from a bolter shot. As you take a closer look at this corpse, you notice something else. Underneath the blood and gore, you can see he's wearing the robes of an astropath.

**Will [Sylus]:** "Lazaro, I think I found our missing astropath..."

**Steve [Lazaro]:** "An astropath whose head exploded? Emperor save us, that cannot be good."

**Jez [GM]:** The words are barely out of Lazaro's mouth when you hear a blood-curdling scream and the air turns chill. You hear heavy thuds from behind the closed door. Something is coming.

**Will [Sylus]:** "Throne protect us!"

**Lyra [Amosis]:** "Take cover!"

**Steve [Lazaro]:** "Stand firm and do your duty!"

The adventure continues on from here. Who or what is behind the door? Just what happened at the research station? And where is Tomas, the missing agent of Inquisitor Whitlocke? Rick, Lyra, Will and Steve will find out as their adventure continues. Your own game, however, is just beginning...

### AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT REALITY

When you take part in a roleplaying game you set aside reality and literal truth for a world of imagination and adventure. The Game Master is there to create a world for the players. All the ideas and rules in this book are tools for the GM to use as they see fit. The GM is the ultimate arbitrator of the rules and may choose to modify, amend or even ignore certain rules to better suit the playing style of your group. Abide by your GM's decisions as they are the one doing all the work to keep you and your group entertained!

On a final note, it must be pointed out that *Dark Heresy* deals with mature themes and concepts. Diemons, insanity, death, corruption and despair are all integral elements of the *Warhammer 40,000* setting. Just because *DARK HERESY* deals with these things it doesn't mean every game session needs to be a harrowing experience. *DARK HERESY* is a game and it's meant to be enjoyable! Similarly, all the things depicted in this book do not exist. Don't get confused—just play the game and have fun!