

# DARK HERESY™

## THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED™



ROLEPLAYING IN THE GRIM  
DARKNESS OF THE 4<sup>1</sup><sup>ST</sup> MILLENNIUM

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# INTRODUCTION

*“Around us is darkness and sin. We slip as one ever further into hell. If one could arrest our slide to damnation, but doing so would cost more lives than you can comprehend, is it not right to take that step. Appalling though the price might be, is it not our duty?”*

—Pronouncement of the First Synod of the Maledictor’s Hand

**T**HE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED is the second part of **THE APOSTASY GAMBIT**, a trilogy of **DARK HERESY** adventures pitting a cell of Acolytes against a conspiracy within the Imperial Church. This conspiracy, the Maledictor’s Hand, wants to create religious chaos in the Calixis Sector, in the hope that all the sinners will be burned away in a great and violent upheaval. **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** sees the Acolytes investigating Arch-Cardinal Ignato, the most senior official of the Ecclesiarchy in the entire Calixis Sector. Uncovering Ignato’s plan is only the first challenge, however, for after he is dealt with a greater threat is revealed – “Ignato” is actually a different conspirator wearing Ignato’s skin, since the real Ignato was secretly replaced by the Maledictor’s Hand when his plans became too excessive even for them. With the impostor gone the true Ignato is free to pursue his own heinous plan, a plot so diabolical that it could spell the end of the Calixis Sector.

**THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** can be played on its own, as part of your own campaign, or as part of **THE APOSTASY GAMBIT** trilogy. The starting point for the campaign is the knowledge that Arch-Cardinal Ignato is suspected of membership in the Maledictor’s Hand, and a number of

options are given for working this into your own campaign. In **THE APOSTASY GAMBIT** campaign, this knowledge is acquired by the Acolytes at the conclusion of the first adventure, **THE BLACK SEPULCHRE**, giving Game Masters the perfect way to dive into **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** without further ado.

## GAME MASTER’S BRIEFING

**THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** is split between investigative scenes and action scenes. Every type of Acolyte should find something to do, be it interviewing recalcitrant witnesses, spying on the Imperial Clergy, or blasting underhive scum into oblivion. The adventure takes Acolytes from the Cathedral of Illumination to the underhive of Gunmetal City, onto a besieged spaceship deep in the void, and finally to the tomb of Saint Drusus on Stonegarden where a terrible revelation awaits them. The adventure, therefore, provides a chance for the Game Master to show off some of the most dramatic, beautiful, and terrible sights of the Calixis Sector.

The sections of the adventure set in the Cathedral of Illumination are non-linear exploration, with the Acolytes having to follow their own path in seeking evidence against Ignato. Their underhive jaunt is similarly investigative, as they try to track down a key witness, to plans of the Maledictor’s Hand, although the dangers of the underhive mean violence is inevitable. Their journey to Stonegarden, meanwhile, is full of action set-pieces, as they fend off an attack by insane devotees of the Imperial Cult, and the showdown on Stonegarden is a high-risk, high-octane mission into certain danger and probable doom.



## ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED is broken into three parts:

### CHAPTER I: THE SUM OF ALL GLORIES

The Acolytes, using the cover of an investigation into the cathedral's relics, explore the magnificent Cathedral of Illumination for clues about the intentions of Arch-Cardinal Ignato. However they deal with this investigation, the suspicions of fellow clergy and a hidden forgery lab lead them to the identity of Venomskin, an underhive criminal in contact with Ignato for what are surely underhanded purposes.

### CHAPTER II: BAD DAY AT BLINDING GULCH

The Acolytes delve into Gunmetal City's underhive in search of Venomskin. There they find themselves caught in a war between rival gangs, and must employ cunning, diplomacy, and a lot of bloodshed to get access to Venomskin's hideout. The Maledictor's Hand has gotten there first, but from the dying Venomskin the Acolytes learn of the Hand's plan to create a religious schism through the creation of false tomes alleged to contain the incendiary lost writings of Saint Drusus himself.

With proof of his wrongdoing, Ignato can be confronted and killed or subdued. The Acolytes return to the Cathedral of Illumination to take Ignato down, but find that the cathedral is besieged by hordes of pilgrims. Ignato, knowing the Acolytes are on to him, has put about the false rumour that the altarpiece

depicting the Emperor has begun weeping blood and speaking words of infinite wisdom. He has done this knowing that the people of Hive Tarsus will try to force their way in to witness this miracle, and that Ignato can use the cover of the chaos to burn down the cathedral and destroy any evidence of his membership in the Maledictor's Hand. The Acolytes must force their way into the cathedral and fight through the Redemptionists trying to burn it down on Ignato's orders before they can face Ignato himself.

At this point the Acolytes reach one of the adventure's major twists. The man they have slain is not Ignato at all, but an impostor—a rogue psyker and fellow member of the Maledictor's Hand—wearing Ignato's skin. The psyker's death sets Ignato free, and he sets off on a quest to fulfil his own ghastly plan. The Acolytes know only that the real Ignato is on Stonegarden, where Saint Drusus was laid to rest in a vast sarcophagus complex.

### CHAPTER III: PIETY AFLAME

On their way to Stonegarden, the Acolytes' ship, *The Righteous Indignation*, is attacked by frenzied zealots of the Imperial Creed, used as ignorant shocktroops by the Maledictor's Hand. Only by boarding and destroying their assailants' vessel can the Acolytes save themselves.

The Acolytes arrive at Stonegarden, now transformed into a deathtrap by Ignato's lackeys. At Stonegarden's heart they find a cyst of daemonic horror and a terrifying truth – Ignato's plan was to resurrect Saint Drusus' corpse through daemonic possession, so his 'return' would throw the Calixis Sector into religious strife. Now daemons are rampant on Stonegarden, and the Tomb of Saint Drusus is empty..



## BACKSTORY

Hundreds of years ago, the Maledictor's Hand was founded as a conspiracy within the Ecclesiarchy, the Church of the Imperium. Its members believed that the Calixis Sector was damned by all its sinners and corruption, and that it had to be put through a terrible upheaval in which the sinners would be exterminated and the Maledictor's Hand could seize control of the sector synod. The Maledictor's Hand recently achieved one of its major goals when Ignato, a founding member, grasped the title of Arch-Cardinal and took up residence at the Cathedral of Illumination on Scintilla.

Ignato, however, was too unstable even for the Maledictor's Hand. His plan to resurrect Saint Drusus through daemonic possession went too far for the conspiracy to stomach. His fellow conspirators kept him imprisoned by means of a psyker, Caecilius Vraine, who stored the dormant Ignato in the Arch-Cardinal's quarters. Vraine, wearing Ignato's skin, continued to perform Ignato's duties.

'Ignato' (actually Vraine) is using his position to create false tomes of Saint Drusus' writings, with the aid of the underhive forger Venomskin. By disseminating these writings, which call for the arrival of the Tyrant Star to be met with a crusade against the sinners of the Calixis Sector, the Maledictor's Hand hopes to create a religious catastrophe.

However, Ignato is still alive, and continues to plot his own way to purge the Calixis Sector of all its sinners. Should Caecilius Vraine die or be taken away from the Cathedral of Illumination, Ignato will be free to pursue his plot with the aid of crazed zealots of the Imperial Creed still loyal to him. He longs for the moment when he will be free, and as the Acolytes approach the Cathedral of Illumination with Vraine in their sights, that time will surely come more quickly than he could dare hope...

## REPLACEMENT CHARACTERS

For much of **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED**, the Acolytes are not very far from Inquisitorial authority – while they act autonomously, and without the direct support of their patron Inquisitor, it is not too difficult for new Acolytes to be sent to replace dead, insane, or corrupted compatriots. However, options exist for new characters who can be recruited from the Acolytes' immediate locality, especially in situations where it is unrealistic for a new Acolyte to arrive rapidly.

While at the Cathedral of Illumination, plenty of opportunity exists for replacement Acolytes. Clerics, Adepts, and Sororitas can easily be found among the cathedral's clergy, Arbitrators and Guardsmen watch the queuing pilgrims outside, and a few Scum ply their trades among the pilgrim masses.

The Infernis is seething with Scum, perhaps disaffected members of the Skarit's Dragons or the Cadavers. A hardy missionary might be recruited as a Cleric, rogue Psykers hide from the authorities down among the underhivers, and perhaps the gangs keep an Assassin on the payroll who will join the Acolytes for the right price.

On the journey to Stonegarden, Guardsmen and Tech-Priests can be recruited from among *The Righteous Indignation's* armymen or even the senior staff of the Rogue Trader Zanatov, and just about anyone could be found as a prisoner on board the *Faith Beyond Reason*, eager to join the Acolytes in gratitude and for a chance at payback against the Redemptionists of the Maledictor's Hand.

On Stonegarden, pilgrims from all walks of life might find themselves trapped at the spaceport or inside the tomb complex after Ignato's attack. Clerics and Adepts are particularly common.

## THEMES

Certain themes run through **THE APOSTASY GAMBIT** trilogy. They appear in **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** as they did in **THE BLACK SEPULCHRE**, and are mentioned here so that Game Masters can include thematic elements of their own to help foreshadow events and add atmosphere to their Acolytes' adventures.

**Secrets:** **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** is all about uncovering secrets – first the plan to falsify religious texts, and then the real Ignato's despicable plot. Most characters the Acolytes encounter have secrets of their own, which can be uncovered in the course of the adventure.

**Wings:** Wings and feathers are a recurring motif in **THE APOSTASY GAMBIT** trilogy. Ignato sprouts psychic wings in his showdown with the Acolytes, the Emperor's wings on an altarpiece disguise the entrance to a hidden level of the cathedral, and the Wings of Flame is the sect used to attack the Acolytes' ship. Wings and feathers are also symbols of the Chaos God Tzeentch, who has most certainly corrupted the Maledictor's Hand.

**Books:** Books abound in the trilogy, and in this instalment they form a crucial part of the plot as false religious tomes are the basis of the conspiracy's plan.

**Moral Corruption:** The decay of morals is the root cause of all the threats in **THE APOSTASY GAMBIT**. **THE CHURCH OF THE DAMNED** sees the corruption of the Maledictor's Hand, arrogance and disdain fuelling murder in the cathedral's hospital wing, and religious fervour corrupted into violent insanity.

**Ill Advised Alliances:** The Maledictor's Hand has thrown its lot in with Chaos, which has rendered them utterly damned. The Acolytes' investigation and the destruction of the Hand are consequences of this dread alliance, as is Ignato's madness and the awful potential of his plan.

