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# THE EDGE OF DARKNESS

It is the 41st 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 writhing 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 battle fleets cross the Daemoninfested miasma of the Warp, the only route between distant stars, their way lit by the Astronomican, the psychic manifestation of the Emperor's will. Vast armies give battle in his name on uncounted worlds. Greatest amongst his soldiers are the Adeptus Astartes, the Space Marines, bioengineered superwarriors. Their comrades in arms are legion: the Imperial Guard and countless planetary defence forces, the evervigilant Inquisition and the TechPriests of the Adeptus Mechanicus to name but a few. But for all their multitudes, they are barely enough to hold off the everpresent 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

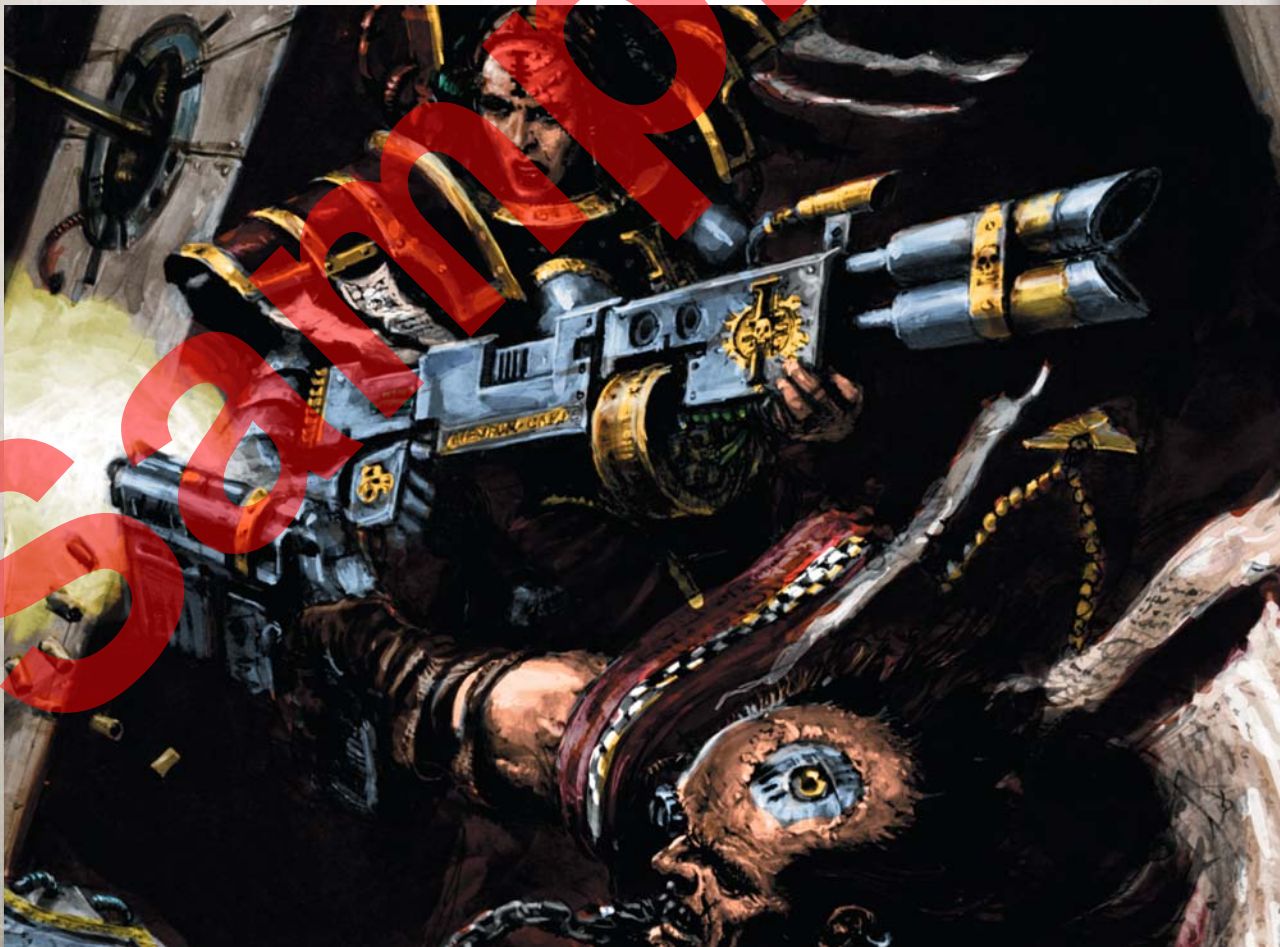
been forgotten, never to be relearned. Forget the promise of progress and understanding, for in the grim darkness of the far future, there is only war. There is no peace amongst the stars, only an eternity of carnage and slaughter, and the laughter of the thirsting gods.

## INTRODUCTION

*"The greatest resource our Holy Imperium possesses is the fathomless multitudes of humanity itself. No power is mightier and no force more dreadful when turned to a single purpose. By human hands alone we have remade stars in our image. By this token the wise know that true power lies in the mastery of blood and bone, in the very meat of mankind."*

—Quastor General, Brantus Hurst, Departmento Munitorium Penitential Command.

The Edge of Darkness is an investigation-based introductory adventure for use with **DARK HERESY**. It is intended for a group of two to four players and will probably take three or six evening sessions of play to complete. The adventure starts with a mysterious death connected to a forlorn district of the vast hive city of Scintilla. The circumstances surrounding this death have piqued the interest of the Inquisition and the player-Acolytes will be called upon to act covertly to explore the matter further. If you're planning to play an Acolyte in this investigation, you should read no further—as you'll spoil the mystery! However, if you are going to be the Game Master (GM), then read on.



## USING THE EDGE OF DARKNESS

This adventure is intended as a prelude to **DARK HERESY**—Fantasy Flight Games’ role playing game of intrigue, adventure and horror in the 41st Millennium. This adventure focuses the Acolytes being “undercover” agents. **EDGE OF DARKNESS** is a self contained adventure intended for Acolytes fresh to the Inquisition’s service and can be used as a taster for some of the themes and stories that the game focuses on, as well as, an immersive introduction to the whole Warhammer 40,000 universe.

The adventure also makes an excellent prelude to a start of an ongoing series of adventures if you already have the **DARK HERESY CORE RULEBOOK** in your hands; in which case just ignore the Quick Start Rules listed here.

For obvious reasons, the full extent of Dark Heresy’s rules and systems cannot be repeated here, however a sampling of basic game mechanics can be found in the Quick Start Rules on page 36 (we suggest that GMs print off these rules pages for their players to use as handy reference). Additional rules and GMs tips have been strategically dotted around the scenario—do make sure to read through these rules carefully. Six introductory Acolyte Player Characters (PCs) have also been created for your use and these can be downloaded from the Fantasy Flight Games website. Other than this adventure, you’ll need some tensided dice (d10) ideally two per player, and of course some willing players!

## GMs BRIEFING

The Edge of Darkness is a mystery adventure and has much in common with a detective story, with the first “clue” being the discovery of the body of a habworker named Saul Arbest. From here the PCs are presented with a number of different leads to follow, which in turn will generate further clues and information, leading them ultimately to the uncovering of a conspiracy of heretical science which, if not stopped by the Acolytes, could lead to the deaths of a great many more people.

As with many such investigation and interaction based adventures, there is no exact “right” or “wrong” path in Edge of Darkness. Although some approaches and pursuing certain leads will be more effective than others. Indeed, the wrong question in the wrong ear, or the overt display of force too early in the adventure will have very unpleasant consequences as the villains of the piece will become aware of the PCs investigation and consequently come “gunning” for the Acolytes with possibly fatal results. Open adventures (like this one), reward clever, imaginative and involved players, and unravelling secret plots, pursuing the truth behind strange events and uncovering dark conspiracies in this fashion are some of the core themes that Dark Heresy deals with. This is not to say that adventures such as this lack action, or indeed horror, far from it, as in this case the villains behind the plot are monstrous individuals guilty of gruesome crimes who will have to be stopped by force. In addition, the setting itself is a dangerous one, where violence threatens at any moment. As a result a mixture of combative and more cerebral characters

are recommended, as each will have more than a fair chance to shine as the adventure progresses.

In order to help out novice GMs a far amount of advice on running the adventure and using the rules has been included in the text.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Heresy and evil takes root most readily and most easily in forlorn and forgotten places, be they on distant worlds, in isolated communities or, as here, in a place that has become the victim of disaster, economic starvation and slow neglect. In the shadows of the mighty spires of Hive Sibellus on the world of Scintilla, in a run down and decaying district called the Coscarla Division, a criminal and heretical conspiracy has taken hold. Using the destitute and fearful populous as a shield and a ready supply of “material” when needed, an individual going by the name of “the Churgeon” and her lackeys have set up a hidden medical facility to conduct horrific and forbidden experiments. In order to mask their activities, the tech cult has infiltrated and secretly usurped control of both a local Alms House and the area’s enforcers to further their ends, and is supplying chemical serums to criminal narcogangs in order to induce their complicity in the cult’s dark plans.

The Churgeon is a renegade techdept in the employ of the heretical cult known as the Logicians. She is a biosculptor whose particular area of interest is the creation of (illegal) alchemical serums and artificial organs to augment human biology. She requires live human subjects for experimentation and the downtrodden people of Coscarla have proved a ready source of victims. She has no care for the lives of her servants or for those her macabre experiments kill or mutilate, and already her servants have “vanished” scores of Coscarla’s people. One such abducted experimental subject, a man named Saul Arbest, managed to escape before dying on the transit rail. It is his body, once discovered, that sparks the Inquisition’s interest in the matter and the involvement of the Acolytes.

Once the Churgeon’s current round of tests are concluded,

### FROM SHATTERED HOPE TO THE EDGE

**DARK HERESY**’s first published demo adventure **SHATTERED HOPE** was an actionoriented adventure that dealt with events at the Gorgonid Mine on the world of Sepheris Secundus. This adventure, however, assumes no need for that demo to have been played first and starts with a group of newly recruited Acolytes for convenience of play. You can of course carry on one adventure from the other (in either order). If you wish to follow on from **SHATTERED HOPE**, then it is reasonable to assume that sufficient time has passed for wounds to heal, during which the Acolytes will have been thoroughly questioned and tested for contamination.

Both this adventure and **SHATTERED HOPE** make for excellent preludes to **ILLUMINATIONS**—the larger starting adventure contained within the **DARK HERESY CORE RULEBOOK**.

she intends to cover her tracks by releasing a biological agent to mimic the effects of a plague outbreak, killing perhaps tens of thousands of people in the process. She has done it before, and if not stopped, shall do it again.

## SYNOPSIS OF THE ADVENTURE

The adventure is divided into three distinct parts, the first is a narrated introductory section where the Acolytes are brought together by the Inquisition and briefed on the matter at hand. In the second part, the Acolytes are left to their own initiative to explore and investigate the dead man and the Coscarla Division district where the adventure's action is set. Depending on the fruits of their progress (or indeed as a consequence of their blundering,) the third part of the adventure, where the uncovered conspiracy must be fought and defeated, can kick in at any point, proving the adventure's conclusion in a fastpaced kill or be killed conflict.

### Part I: Among the Missing

The Inquisition's attention has been stirred by the discovery of a body on the Sibellus transit rail. This is not in itself an uncommon occurrence; however the body, under forensic examination, showed extensive signs of surgical tampering and illegal organgrafting indicative of heretical science. The Inquisition has kept the body and the incident under wraps, and has determined it to be that of a missing habworker called Saul Arbest. Arbest was reported missing over a month ago by his sister, from his home in the dilapidated Coscarla Division area of Hive Sibellus. The Inquisition is interested in just how this heretical biocraft wound up in the body of this otherwise unremarkable citizen and will brief the Acolytes as to what is known and dispatch them to covertly investigate matters.

### Part II: The Twilight City

Here the Acolytes travel to the Coscarla Division to investigate the dead man and gather as many clues as they can. They will find an area of the city dying from slow urban decay and held hostage to a nameless fear, and if successful, they will uncover evidence that something truly evil is coiling at the heart of things. There are opportunities for numerous encounters here, including interaction with local NPCs both fair and foul, and although combat is by no means guaranteed, the Acolytes may end up in a violent confrontation with local criminal gangs, corrupt enforcers, murderous dregs or even a barroom brawl. If the Acolytes are circumspect and successful, they will be drawn to what goes on behind the public façade of the Tantalus Alms House for their answers. If they have aroused the suspicions of their unseen enemies, they might find themselves dragged to the Alms House as the Churgeon's latest victims.

### Part III: The Chamber of Horrors

The true face of what lurks behind the fear gripping Coscarla is exposed and the horrors of the Churgeon's alchemlab are revealed— one way or the other. The results of this exposure may well force the enemy into the open and the Acolytes will find themselves fighting for their lives with no escape readily available. If this comes to pass, the Acolytes will have to be smart to survive and overcome the Churgeon and her minions, perhaps enlisting help from some unexpected sources to do so. Triumphant over the evils of the Churgeon will be difficult but rewarding, and ultimately will save a great many lives, as well as proving the Acolytes' worth as new agents for the Holy Ordos.

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Here are several important Non Player Characters (NPCs) involved in the adventure, detailing their personalities and motivations. Owing to the adventure's set up and freeform structure, there are quite a few characters involved, not all of



## ADVICE TO NOVICE GMs: ON RUNNING EDGE OF DARKNESS

The Edge of Darkness is an adventure based on an ongoing situation into which the Acolytes are drawn and as such, the events and characters involved in the conspiracy in Coscarla have their own motivations with which the Acolytes, as outsiders, interact.

Once inside Coscarla's environs the Acolytes have a free hand about how to proceed and what leads and clues to follow, and it is up to you, as the GM, to respond to their actions as you feel appropriate. When GMing a "nonlinear" adventure like this one, you should always feel free to embellish the details, come up with new encounters and have events and individuals react to the Acolytes' actions as this will always make for a tighter story, a sense of empowerment for your players and, accordingly, a better game all round.

Adventures like this one can demand a little more from the GM and you'll be required to think on your feet, keep an idea of what's going on in your head and respond to whatever plans and ideas your player's might come up. The key things are to be firm but fair; don't be afraid to have NPCs act or react adversely and violently if the Acolytes' actions make this the logical outcome, and of course reward quick thinking and good ideas on the players' part with additional clues, information and assistance as warranted. Also, even more than with more linear adventures, it is important to be familiar with the details of the adventure itself, not simply so you know who is where and doing what, but also how the significant NPCs will react to the unexpected, and so you can add to things as you go along without risk of messing up your own plot!

Although it may sound obvious, a handy notebook to record names and the like as you go along, or to record what the Acolytes have learned so far, is heartily recommended! If this all sounds like a fair amount of work for the GM, that's because it is. But at the same time, if you're something of a storyteller at heart, it can be a very rewarding game experience indeed.

these characters may actually come into play as their roles in the adventure are dependent upon the Acolytes and how your players approach things.

**Interrogator Sand:** A senior agent of the Inquisition, scholar and medicae. He comes across as a superior and somewhat jaded man. Sand is the one who charges the Acolytes to undertake the investigation into Saul Arbest.

**Saul Arbest (Deceased):** Saul's fate is the root of this investigation; this missing worker's corpse and, in particular, its hidden modifications are the reason for the Acolyte's involvement. In life Arbest was a man on the slide, laidoff from his indenture, without work and without a future, he drank too much, used his mouth too freely and paid a very heavy price.

**Lili Arbest:** Saul's sister, Lili is a young woman grown old with worry before her time. She is a skilled worker who fears to leave Coscarla before the mystery of her missing brother goes unsolved. However, when the Acolytes first encounter her, she

will be in fear of her life and about to flee.

**Warden Locan:** A simpering, middleaged man, Locan is the corrupt enforcer officer nominally in charge of maintaining order in the Coscarla. Abandoned to this "graveyard posting" by his superiors in the Magistratum, Locan is an obscura addict, a shadow of his former self and long since compromised by the local narcogangs. He is now under the direct control of the Logicians and his troopers replaced with their own. Torn between his addiction and his terror, he will make a poor show of the pretence of normality if encountered.

**Evard Zed:** Another victim of the district's economic woes, Zed was one of Saul Arbest's drinking cronies. He was with Saul on the night that he vanished and holds some of the secrets of Saul's disappearance. He is laying low spending his time in the templum, helping out and hoping to go unnoticed.

**Preacher Fayban:** Winesoaked, dishevelled and thoroughly useless religious minister of the Imperial Creed. He rarely leaves his small templum and conducts faltering services for the faithful. Sorrowful, maudlin and broken in spirit, he is wilfully ignorant of the extent of the suffering and fear around him.

**Sikes the Reclaimator:** An itinerant scavenger and techreclaimator, Sikes has set up an impromptu business in a burned out store selling and bartering odds and ends of scrap with the impoverished locals. Sikes is an outsider to the district, making his living parasitically from its troubles, however, there is a good deal more to him than meets the eye.

**Hosteller Maxus Drayelok:** Proprietor of the district's only hostel, Drayelok is a gaunt, tattered figure and his establishment sinister and dilapidated. A psychotic obscura addict, barely in control of his cold sweats and twitches, Drayelok has the unpleasant habit of using downhiver dregs to murder his guests in the night so he can rob them to fund his vice.

**"Chord" Luntz:** A hatchetman for the narcogang syndicates, Luntz is here to take the syndicate's due from the Churgeon and has a dozen stubjacks and gang blades at his beck and call. Privately he has his own reservations and fears about the Churgeon's other activities (and worsening death toll), and is taking out his anger on the patrons of the Third Worker's Union Hall, where he and his gangers have taken up residence.

**Director Sybas Moran:** The director of the Tantalus Alms House, Moran presents himself as a cold but efficient adept, administering a dwindling supply of alms and assistance for the good of the workers on an everdecreasing budget. In truth he is a practiced deceiver and ruthless killer, but one on who the mask of charity is wearing thin. An senior agent of the Logicians, Moran would rather see the Churgeon's work done and the Coscarla choking on its own dead, so he can move on to greener pastures.

**The Churgeon:** The woman known as the Churgeon is more machine than human and quite insane. A renegade techadept she is hidden behind the scenes of the Alms House where she works her profitable alchemy to win over the compliance of the narcogangs so that she may continue her murderous experiments uncontested. The spate of disappearances in the district are largely down to her need for fresh test subjects, and her appetite for new stock is beginning to prove hard for her lackeys to hide.



## AMONG THE MISSING

THE TRADESMAN'S  
ENTRANCE

•

SIZING UP THE  
SITUATION (AND AN  
INTRODUCTION TO TESTS)

•

THE BODY IN QUESTION

•

OUTFITTING FOR A TRIP  
DOWN HIVE