

# BLACK CRUSADE™



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

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# FOREWORD

In January, 2008, Warhammer 40,000 fans received something many of them had been waiting for decades—a roleplaying game set in the grim darkness of the 41st Millennium. Soon after, what would become the Warhammer 40,000 Roleplay development team here at Fantasy Flight Games received three books, a Game Master's kit, and a box. The books were the first three books of the **DARK HERESY** line; the Core Rulebook, the Inquisitor's Handbook, and the adventure *Purge the Unclean*. Inside the box were more than 500 sheets of printouts—the manuscript for the next book in the line, **DISCIPLES OF THE DARK GODS**.

Now, more than three and a half years later, those four books have grown into four game lines (and more than thirty books and other products), each exploring a different facet of the Warhammer 40,000 universe.

**DARK HERESY**, the first of the lines, introduced fans to Warhammer 40,000 Roleplay through service to the secretive Inquisition of the Imperium of Man. **DARK HERESY** presented the Imperium of Man at “street level,” with the players experiencing the life of an Imperial citizen amongst the cyclopean hive cities and towering monuments to mankind. In **DARK HERESY**, life is gritty, brutal, and all too often short.

**ROGUE TRADER**, the second line, took Warhammer 40,000 Roleplay a step further. As *Rogue Traders*, players were handed a ship, a Warrant of Trade, and most importantly, the freedom to go off and use it. Players could explore, fight, and even steal whatever they can find in the dark void beyond the known stars, bound only by the limits of their own ambition. Of course, that selfsame ambition can often lead them into dangerous situations, when they encounter ancient secrets best left undisturbed. In **ROGUE TRADER**, the tone shifts between high adventure and Lovecraftian horror, often without warning.

The third line, **DEATHWATCH**, upped the stakes yet again. One of the most iconic aspects of Warhammer 40,000 are the Adeptus Astartes, the mighty Space Marines. As a member of the alien hunting *Deathwatch*, the players could take on

the role of an Adeptus Astartes. Now, with players becoming warriors deadly enough to laugh at the dangers of the last two game lines, **DEATHWATCH** took some of the greatest threats in the Warhammer 40,000 universe and threw them at the players. Tyranid Hive Tyrants, Tau battlesuits, entire armies of lesser foes, and even the Greater Daemons of Chaos. In **DEATHWATCH**, the action is fast, deadly, and non-stop in the fight against Mankind's most deadly foes.

So now, Fantasy Flight Games is taking the next step in Warhammer 40,000 Roleplay, in allowing players to take on the role of those self-same foes. In each of the previous game lines, gamers have been playing as servants, allies, and even champions of the Imperium. Now, for the first time, you can play its mortal enemies, the servants of the Ruinous Powers and the disciples of the Dark Gods.

We wanted **BLACK CRUSADE** to complement the work we've done on previous game lines, while taking Warhammer 40,000 Roleplay in a bold new direction. To that end we didn't rest on our laurels. We've added in new means of character generation, new and re-imagined mechanics, and new experiences, bundling that all up with a fascinating and frightening new setting nestled amongst the sectors, expanses, and war zones of our other lines. Our goal was to create a game that not only offered a new way to play Warhammer 40,000 Roleplay, but also would prove an invaluable resource to anyone playing one of our other games. After all, Chaos is so often the arch nemesis in Warhammer 40,000, so what better source for the ultimate villains than a book devoted to the Ruinous Powers?

In the end, we feel we've created a book that remains true to the game that so many love, while at the same time giving players exciting new adventures and experiences. **BLACK CRUSADE** promises to be the next step in a bright and thrilling future for Warhammer 40,000 Roleplay. So grab some D10s and pencils, find some friends, and crack open this book and start playing **BLACK CRUSADE!**

Oh, and death to the False Emperor!

Happy gaming,

The Warhammer 40,000 Roleplay Team



# It is the 42st 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 battlefleets cross the Daemon-infested miasma of the warp, the only route between distant stars, their way lit by the Astronomicon, 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, 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. These are the tales of those times. 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 dark 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.

Yet there are those who rise above the teeming masses, rejecting the conformity and servility of mankind. The ignorant call them traitors, heretics, lost, and damned—but they know themselves as the Disciples of the Dark Gods.



# EMBRACE THE POWER OF CHAOS

**W**elcome to **BLACK CRUSADE**, a roleplaying game of personal power, betrayal, and forging an epic destiny with one's own hands. You take on the roles of heretics, worshippers of the Dark Gods of Chaos fighting against the crumbling monolith that is the Imperium of Man.

The Imperium is the massive empire of humanity, stretching from one end of the galaxy to the other. However, it is beset on all sides by threats; both human and alien. It is also a harsh, cold regime, enforcing its rule with the iron fist of its mighty armies. The Imperial Guard, the Imperial Navy, and above all, the genetically enhanced superhuman warriors of the Adeptus Astartes, the mighty Space Marines.

Though the galaxy of the Imperium is vast, there is another realm, alongside which the Imperium is nothing in comparison. The Realms of Chaos, the warp, the immaterium, all are names humanity has given this parallel dimension. None, however, can hope to encompass it, for the warp is a realm of infinite size, infinite possibilities, and infinite madness.

Humanity makes use of the warp. Starships travel through it to reach the far ends of the galaxy, astropaths send messages through it that would take centuries to travel across realspace, and those blessed (or cursed) with psychic potential can manipulate the warp's energy to do miraculous and terrible things. However, the immaterium is far from a resource to be harvested, or even an ally to be trusted. The warp is a realm of swirling emotions, of thought made manifest, and of the purest chaos. Deep in the darkest corners of the immaterium, vast, unknowable intelligences move like sharks beneath the surface of the ocean. They speak to mankind, offering power at a price.

And though the price may be steep, it is one many gladly pay. As a disciple of the Ruinous Powers, you have turned your back on the Imperium. You

have abandoned the oppressive society of mankind, and turned to those unknowable entities within the warp: the Dark Gods of Chaos. Now you fight for your new masters, or only for yourself, to gain plunder, glory, and infamy. Perhaps you will gain enough power to lead your own armies, rising up to command your own Black Crusade!

**BLACK CRUSADE** centres around a small group of powerful individuals, the warband. You, the players, take on the role of members of that warband, either as Traitor Legionnaires (Space Marines who have turned from the Imperium and embraced Chaos) or powerful human renegade and heretic Disciples of the Dark Gods. Though you have only yourselves to rely on, you are some of the most formidable warriors and dangerous adversaries in the galaxy, and there is much you can accomplish with your own hands.

The game focuses on your warband's rise to power and glory. Your characters must be resourceful, powerful, and bold to succeed. As you accomplish great deeds and defeat powerful foes you accrue more infamy and fortune. Meanwhile, you are constantly being infused with the attentions of the Ruinous Powers, attentions which can have very real effects and corrupt you in body and mind even as they give you greater abilities and powers. You must earn enough renown and infamy to impress the gods and be elevated to immortal daemonhood upon your end. Perhaps you may even be one of the very few skilled enough to earn the infamy required to lead your own Black Crusade before your apotheosis.

## WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

In a roleplaying game (or RPG), you create an alter ego, a fictional character that is your avatar within the game world. Perhaps you create a honourable warrior, a cunning sorcerer, or a leader who inspires loyalty through dark magnificence. Next, you and your friends direct your characters through a series of adventures. Imagine reading a fantasy novel, watching an action movie, or following a television series—except instead of passively watching or reading the story unfold, you control one of the characters, making his decisions, selecting his actions, and even speaking for him. Instead of waiting to see how the story unfolds, you directly affect and even determine the outcome of the story.

How can you affect these events? How do you decide what happens? That is the role of the game itself. Roleplaying games such as **BLACK CRUSADE** provide a framework of rules that describe how to design your character and have him interact with the world within the game. Rules cover situations like sword fights, delicate negotiations, or infiltrating an Imperial stronghold to destroy it. Often, the rules require you to roll dice when performing an action, with some results indicating success and others indicating failure. While the rules provide structure and guidelines to the game, dice add the element of chance. After all, success would not be so sweet if you had no chance of failing!

At first, RPGs like **BLACK CRUSADE** seem like they have a lot of rules. However, as you read the book you will soon see that the rules are actually quite simple, easy to remember, and even intuitive. **BLACK CRUSADE** is built on a simple set of base mechanics. Once you grasp the basic mechanics, the rest is easily understood.

To adjudicate these rules, each game has a Game Master (or GM). The GM is you, or one of your friends, chosen by consensus of your group. Unlike everyone else, the GM does not control a single character. Instead, the GM runs the game, presenting the story and the myriad of situations that come with it. He controls the people your character meets in the game, controls the encounters and strange occurrences that shape your decisions as to your actions, and is basically both the game's narrator and the referee.

All of the other players control characters within the world, around which the story resolves. These characters are known as the Player Characters (also referred to as the PCs or Heretics). During the game, the players describe the intentions and actions of their characters to the GM, who then decides (based on the rules) whether those actions succeed or fail, and how their words and deeds affect the story.

## WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

**BLACK CRUSADE** is divided into twelve chapters. They are:

### INTRODUCTION

The section you are reading right now. It provides an overview of **BLACK CRUSADE** and roleplaying in general, then goes into detail about the galaxy in the 41st Millennium. This provides the background you need to understand the Warhammer 40,000 universe.

### CHAPTER I: PLAYING THE GAME

This chapter explains the core mechanics of **BLACK CRUSADE**.

### CHAPTER II: CHARACTER CREATION

This chapter takes you step by step through the process of creating your character and advancing him during the game.

### CHAPTER III: SKILLS

From Awareness to Forbidden Lore, each character has a variety of Skills he can employ. This chapter describes them and how they can be used.

### CHAPTER IV: TALENTS & TRAITS

Every character also has certain special abilities that make him unique, such as Swift Attack or Cold Hearted. This chapter describes these Talents and Traits.

### CHAPTER V: ARMOURY

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

### CHAPTER VI: PSYCHIC POWERS

The warp may grant strange and supernatural powers to certain characters. This chapter details the psychic powers available to those characters, how they work, and how they might go wrong.

### CHAPTER VII: COMBAT

This chapter describes the rules for fighting combat encounters, from minor skirmishes with a single foe to massive battles against a horde of enemies.

### CHAPTER VIII: THE GAME MASTER

The GM has a special role to play in any RPG, and this chapter explains how to best fulfil that role. In addition, this chapter contains rules for Fear, experience, and Compacts.

### CHAPTER IX: CORRUPTION AND INFAMY

As characters accomplish great deeds, they earn Infamy, and as they garner the attentions of the warp, they earn Corruption. The interactions of these mechanics are described here.

### CHAPTER X: A GALAXY IN FLAME

The Screaming Vortex is a massive warp storm, but within are countless worlds isolated from the Imperium. This is the setting for **BLACK CRUSADE**.

### CHAPTER XI: ADVERSARIES

From the deadly Harlequins to the servants of the hated Imperium, this chapter provides a host of enemies for you to face.

### CHAPTER XII: FALSE PROPHETS

This book includes an adventure optimized for starting characters. A mysterious invitation provides the spring-board for intrigue, chaos, and the introduction of larger adventures.