

# DEATHWATCH™



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

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# FOREWORD

I think it is fairly safe to say that the idea of exploring the universe of Warhammer 40,000 (40K) through the medium of a roleplaying game has been around for as long as the tabletop battlegame has been in existence (Games Workshop published *Warhammer 40,000: Rogue Trader* in 1987). The rich and varied background of the universe and its amazing cast of characters appeared to offer an unparalleled opportunity for the creation of a really enthralling roleplaying experience. As the years passed and GW increasingly focussed its publishing efforts on the tabletop miniatures game, the prospect of a 40K roleplaying game happening became ever more remote, even if it never lost its glittering promise. Some may have even referred to the idea as the 'Holy Grail' of the roleplaying hobby. Many may have doubted that such a venture would ever come to pass. However, a few years ago, some folks at Games Workshop finally put into place some plans to do exactly that. The result of their efforts was the launch in 2008 of the **DARK HERESY** book and the grim darkness of the far future could now be explored by legions of roleplaying enthusiasts. The popularity of **DARK HERESY** outstripped all expectations, and it was clear that the idea of roleplaying in the 41st Millennium was as strong, if not stronger than it had ever been. The subsequent licensing of the property to Fantasy Flight Games first consolidated and then built on this success, in somewhat spectacular fashion it has to be said. FFG have already produced a string of high quality supplements for **DARK HERESY** and in 2009 launched **ROGUE TRADER**, the second core rulebook in the series, and associated supplements. With this amazing wealth of material and the growing popularity of both strands, it is now difficult to imagine a roleplaying scene without a Warhammer 40,000 presence.

This volume, **DEATHWATCH**, completes the triptych of 40K Roleplay core rulebooks and introduces the Space Marines. That this book is devoted to the Adeptus Astartes explains to some extent the structure of the whole 40K roleplay line. As I said earlier, a few years ago a small group of people at Games Workshop began to think seriously about how we might actually publish a 40K roleplaying game. There was, if I recall, much excitement and quite a few proposals as to how we might approach such a venture. Broadly speaking these proposals fell into one of two camps. On the one side was the opinion that because Space Marines were so powerful in the setting it made no sense to have them being featured alongside other characters at low levels of play and that therefore including them at all would simply unbalance the game. On the other side was the opinion that a 40K game without Space Marines was just unthinkable and that the game would have little interest if they were left out. So did we publish a



40K roleplaying game with or without Space Marines? The solution we eventually settled upon was to do both!

In fact, we went one further and sketched out a plan that added a third core rulebook to the set. This gave us, on paper at least, an interesting progression through the universe of the 41st Millennium and through the power levels of the player characters. We also gave tentative themes and titles to the three core rulebooks. **DARK HERESY** would introduce the universe to roleplayers and provide a very strong environment for developing low level, inexperienced characters under the aegis of the Inquisition (a format very much inspired by the earlier and perfectly successful tabletop game **INQUISITOR** by Games Workshop). **ROGUE TRADER** would expand the game's horizons and introduce higher level characters and adventures and maybe the first look at a playable Space Marine. Finally **DEATHWATCH** would present the Space Marines in all of their glory—the ultimate warriors facing the most dangerous challenges.

As it turned out, the GW team only got to do part one of the set and that book along with the plan we had sketched out was offered to FFG when they acquired the license. To our delight, they liked both **DARK HERESY** and our plan and immediately set about turning parts two and three into a reality. In the course of doing this it has been inevitable that Ross and his teams have had to adapt those initial ideas somewhat. As well as making some essential changes and developments they have added an enormous amount of original material of their own devising to the final fleshed-out products. This has resulted in the most amazing series of roleplaying books, as you can no doubt ascertain for yourself by examining the book in your hands right now. This realisation of those early ideas in such a high quality fashion and the dedication and ongoing commitment of FFG to the property is immensely satisfying to those of us at GW who were involved in those early planning meetings. It is good to know that the 'Holy Grail' has not only been grasped but that it is in such talented hands. The 41st Millennium may be grim and dark but the future of 40K roleplaying looks very bright indeed.

Alan Merrett,  
Games Workshop 2010



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Alan Merrett'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.