



**WARHAMMER**  
40,000

# BLOOD ANGELS

HONOUR AND WRATH

DAVID ANNANDALE



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David Annandale

He looked up at the night sky above the cathedral spires. The stars were a cold, pitiless light in the harsh black. The stone wall against his back was cold, too, and was in his core, growing worse. He was too tired to shiver, though not too tired to speak. Not yet. There was time for a tale. There was no better time for a tale.

‘You’ve never seen the Blood Angels,’ Kelaus Uhle said.

‘No,’ said Harn. ‘You know I haven’t.’

‘Then you can’t understand. And you should. You must. This is very important.’

‘Why?’

‘Cost. We all have to understand the nature of cost.’

‘All right,’ said Harn. ‘I’m listening.’

‘I want to tell you of the last war.’ If he turned his eyes to the right, Uhle would be able to see his grandson. He kept his gaze on the stars. ‘There was a great heresy then. It was brought to Laudamus by Traitor Space Marines. They believed themselves to be possessors of perfect truth and perfect judgement. They walked in armour whose violet flames appeared to consume the pink of martyred flesh.’

‘The Flawless Host,’ Harn said.

‘You are listening. Good.’

‘I know what you want to say.’

‘Maybe you know, but you don’t understand. Not yet.’

‘Go on then.’

‘The Traitors were convincing. They crushed all resistance. Within days of their arrival, Laudamus was theirs. I remember the weeping of my parents. They had fought, and they had lost. They were among the lucky few to survive the

slaughter. They were also among the few who remained faithful to the Emperor. The heresy of the Flawless Host was a plague. Our people were weak. They burned in the fever of defeat, and the victors infected their souls with their false truth. It took very little time before our world echoed with the praise of the Traitors. Then the purges began. Mobs of heretics sought out those who clung the Imperial Creed. To please their corrupt masters, they hauled the faithful out of their homes and burned them in the squares.'

'You were so young, then,' Harn interrupted. 'How can you trust your memory?'

Uhle almost closed his eyes, then. He wanted to retreat into his personal dark, to turn away from the unblinking judgement of the stars, and away from the wounds of the past.

'Human flesh on fire. A thousand victims piled up in a single pyre. The screams. That smell, that sight and that sound do not fade with time. My parents hid with me in the sewers. I saw the world through the grates of gutter drains. The Traitors and their heresy had possession of Laudamus. But then the sky wept blood.'

He paused. The memory of that sight made him smile through the cold.

'They came down in tears of iron,' Uhle said. 'The Blood Angels. I saw the streaks in the night. I heard the thunder of their landings outside Sempiternus. The thunder didn't stop. It only grew louder as they smashed through the walls and advanced down the streets. I saw them. No, *saw* is too poor and thin a word. You do not merely *see* the Blood Angels. I *witnessed* them. So did my parents, and the other refugees in the sewers. They were majesty in crimson. They were giants, divine knights of war. You may think you know the meaning of glory. You may think you can picture it. You can't. You must *witness*. Your soul must experience sunlight and flames and las reflecting off the red and gold of that armour. If it has not, then it does not know glory.'

Uhle watched the stars. They stared back, waiting for him to tell the full story, the full truth.

'We followed the thunder,' he said. 'The stones over our heads shook. Dust covered us. And in this great square was where the Blood Angels confronted the Flawless Host.'

'Look around you, Harn. Do you see how far the nearest hab block is? The square was not as large then. The conflict razed entire blocks. They were never rebuilt. This ground is sacred now. It is here that the Flawless Host's heresy was shattered. The Blood Angels tanks sent purging fire over great masses of

heretics, and now there were new pyres here, and my lungs were filled with the holy stench of burning sacrilege. The Traitors thought to trap the Blood Angels in street-to-street battles. They did not expect the Blood Angels to flatten any building that blocked their path, to utterly destroy great swaths of the city. Think about this. Understand the meaning of *cost*. Thousands died. In every hab. Thousands. Crushed by collapsing rockcrete, burned to death by flaming promethium, blown apart by cannon shells. The slaughter I witnessed in the square paled in comparison. The streets ran with blood. I saw it stream from the destroyed buildings. The Blood Angels were merciless. They were the embodiment of *annihilation*. They had the right to be. Anyone living in those habs had chosen the Traitors over the Emperor, and this was their judgement.

‘I was looking through an aperture not far from here,’ Uhle said, gesturing to his left. ‘I was less than two metres from a struggle between two of the Traitors and a sergeant of the Blood Angels. His name, I learned later, was Gamigin. He wore no helmet. His scalp was clean-shaven. His face had the beauty of carved marble, but it bore so many scars. He was a defaced statue. He frightened me. I knew the Traitors to be monsters, but I was not prepared to see brutal ugliness layered over an angel’s perfection of nobility.

‘Gamigin fought with a chainsword. He fought with anger. What was I saying about glory? I will say the same about wrath. The savagery with which he killed both Traitors is still before my eyes.

‘They wielded chainaxes. They swung the weapons at him from both flanks at once. He stepped back, and the axe blades clashed. He brought his blade forward to throat level and cut through the seam of one Traitor’s gorget. Pushed the chainsword forward, he severed his foe’s head, and his eyes were alight with the perfection of judgement.

‘He was the hand of the Emperor, exacting every drop of blood owed for the crime of treachery. The other warrior of the Flawless Host struck a blow to Gamigin’s back that staggered him. But he turned his stumble into a whirl, his eyes now red with a rage. He countered with a flurry of blows. They were so fast, a wonder fuelled by anger that terrifies me even now. His chainsword broke through the Traitor’s chestplate and ground through bone and muscle. Gamigin’s teeth were bared, and they were fanged. The blood of the Traitors drenched him, and in dreams that may be memories I see him *drink* the vitae.

‘I saw more that day. The sights are before me now. Every crime the heretics and Traitors had committed was repaid a hundredfold. The Blood Angels were transformed. They were wrath itself. They ripped the enemy apart. Do you

understand? *Ripped them apart.* Crimson rain fell on this square. I saw bodies crushed, immolated, punctured by their own jagged bones. Nothing was quick. The screams went on and on and on. The war ended, but the screams of the punished did not. This was *cost*, Harn. Those were *consequences.*'

The memory of nightmare justice poured fire into his blood. Sleep receded. His heart burned with his own rage.

'After the war, when the heretical dead lay in mounds ten metres high, and the Flawless Host had been driven from Laudamus, I saw Gamigin again. The Blood Angels marched from Sempiternus, their standards high, and the sergeant more stern and calm than the stone he so resembled. But it is the rage I remember most clearly.

'Harn, you cannot imagine that wrath and the terror and agony it wrought.'

A few of the stars began to move and Uhle smiled. Now he lowered his eyes. He looked at the man who had been his grandson, but who had carved the ritualistic runes into his face and chest and wore filthy robes of a cultist. The man who had willingly thrown his lot in with the returned Flawless Host.

The man who had plunged a twisted blade into his gut.

The cold was taking Uhle down, but he had held it at bay long enough. He had lived to know retribution was coming.

'You cannot imagine the wrath,' he said again. 'But by the Throne, you will know it.'

The stars were falling. The drop pods scarred the night. Once more, the sky was weeping blood.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**David Annandale** is the author of The Horus Heresy novel *The Damnation of Pythos*. He also writes the Yarrick series, consisting of the novella *Chains of Golgotha* and the novel *Imperial Creed*. For Space Marine Battles he has written *The Death of Antagonis* and *Overfiend*. He is a prolific writer of short fiction, including the novella *Mephiston: Lord of Death* and numerous short stories set in The Horus Heresy and Warhammer 40,000 universes. David lectures at a Canadian university, on subjects ranging from English literature to horror films and video games.

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