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C Z DUNN
**THE RAGE OF
ASMODAI**
A Dark Angels Audio Drama

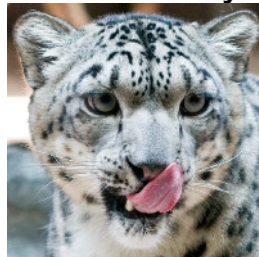
THE RAGE OF ASMODAI (2017)

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List of characters:

- **Vidarna** – Captain of the Relictors;
- **Asmodai** - Dark Angels Chaplain;
- **Assiah, Maximae, Bollwa, Fessek** – battle brothers of the Relictors

(Asmodai making a slicing cut)

(enchained prisoner moaning from pain and mumbling)

Asmodai dropped the blade and stepped back to examine his work. The prisoner's body was a tapestry¹ of pain. Deep incisions latticed² the flesh in precise patterns. The art of their creation had been handed down through the millennia by scores³ of Dark Angels Interrogator-Chaplains. Once the traitor Space Marine, suspended by chains from the ceiling of the torture chamber, had been clad in black armor, not unlike Asmodai's. Now he hung naked, his skin awash with his own blood.

Prisoner (moaning): "What do you want from me, Dark Angel?"

(Asmodai approaching the prisoner)

Now sooner had the words left his mouth than Asmodai was upon him, gauntleted fingers pushing deep into the open wounds.

Prisoner (wheezing from pain): "Ooooooh".

Asmodai (grimly): "All in good time, traitor".

Asmodai relented⁴ shaking the blood from his hands as he stooped⁵ to retrieve the blade.

Asmodai (grimly taking the blade in his hands): "All in good time".

* * *

(Relictors walking across the forest)

The five brothers of the Relictors Chapter quietly picked their way through the trees, alert for any sign of enemy movement. At their head strode Captain Vidarna, a living study of Space Marine military history, his grey armor a patchwork⁶ of component parts salvaged from the corpses of dead Relictors and brothers of other Chapters alike. In his hands he carried a master-crafted bolter that dated back to the time of the Scouring⁷, once wielded by the master of a Chapter long ago

¹ затканная от руки материя; гобелен, декоративная ткань, имитирующая гобелен

² ставить решётку; обносить решёткой, покрывать сеткой

³ множество, большое количество

⁴ уступать, сдаваться, ослабевать; уменьшаться; успокаиваться, смягчаться

⁵ наклонять, нагибать = stoop down наклоняться, нагибаться; склоняться

⁶ мешанина, ералаш; мозаика, пёстрая смесь, лоскутная работа; лоскутное шитьё, пэчворк

⁷ очистка; шлифовка, шабровка, наказание; избиение, битьё, критика, порицание; разгон, разнос

declared Excommunicate Traitoris and hunted to extinction. Something in the distance caught Vidarna's attention.

Vidarna: "Hold, brothers".

As one the five Relictors fanned out⁸ and dropped to one knee, taking cover behind the thick trunks of the mighty redwoods⁹ that soared¹⁰ hundreds of meters towards the sky. They waited in silence for several moments before Vidarna identified the source of his concern - a small native quadruped¹¹, scurrying¹² around in the undergrowth six kilometers away.

Vidarna: "Move on!"

Vidarna approached Maximae. His brother's suit of Mark IV armor was tarnished¹³ through millennia of use, the last two hundred years of which were his own.

Vidarna: "Stay alert, Maximae".

Maximae (over vox): "Aye, Captain".

Vidarna: "I have the strangest feeling that we are being followed".

They had been on Sesabo, third moon of Corollis V for almost a month, operating alongside Astra Militarum forces to quell¹⁴ an uprising amongst the indigenous population. A charismatic traitor Space Marine had rallied them to action and convinced them to throw off the yoke¹⁵ of Imperial rule. Though the wood the moon supplied to make the stocks of rifles was bountiful¹⁶, in truth the local manufactorum worlds could have easily replaced their supply lines from elsewhere in the subsector. The reaction from the Imperial war machine had been swift and decisive. If the seed of rebellion took root on Sesabo, then other nearby worlds would follow suit denying the weapons factories of the Corollis subsector other vital materials for the lasrifles they manufactured for almost a dozen Imperial Guard regiments.

The Relictors' presence while fortuitous¹⁷ was not part of the Imperium's plan. As long as the Space Marines goals aligned with those of the local commanders, then they would bring the Emperor's might to bear

⁸ развёртываться как веер, расширяться на краю, на конце (о геометрической форме чего-л.)

⁹ красное дерево, древесина красного дерева, секвойя вечнозелёная, калифорнийское мамонтовое дерево

¹⁰ вздыматься; возвышаться (о зданиях, горах)

¹¹ четвероногое животное (обычно млекопитающее)

¹² бежать стремглав; нестись, сновать, суетливо двигаться; метаться

¹³ лишаться блеска, тускнеть, лишать блеска, делать тусклым

¹⁴ подавлять (чьи-л. враждебные действия)

¹⁵ ярмо; хомут, ист. колодка (на шее преступника), рабство, гнёт, притеснение, бремя, тяжесть,

¹⁶ имеющийся в изобилии, богатый, обильный, добрый, щедрый (о людях)

¹⁷ случайный, случающийся неожиданно или по неизвестной причине

without mercy. But as soon as their own agenda was met, they would leave this world with what they had come here to claim.

(several distant explosions, local birds flying into the sky with chirping voices)

Vidarna: “Ambush!”

At the very edge of their field of vision hundreds of rebels emerged from behind the trees, dodging and weaving¹⁸ behind the trunks to avoid the barrage¹⁹ of fire from the Relictors. Though they were still several kilometers away, they were eating up²⁰ the ground quickly and would soon be in weapon’s range to pose a threat to the Space Marines closed in on three sides by the felled redwoods.

Maximae (over vox): “They’ve got us **aimed** in”.

Vidarna: “I almost admire this traitor bastards’ tactics. Break out, don’t get pinned down”.

The five Space Marines rushed forwards in an attempt to escape their confines before it became a slaughtering, but the oncoming rebels brought their big guns to bear: autocannon and heavy bolter fire driving them back into the sparse cover they could find. Brother Assiah took a direct hit to his left pauldron, the ancient armor preventing him from losing his arm, but the skull icon emblazed upon the black background was obliterated forever.

Vidarna: “Are you wounded, brother?”

Assiah (over vox): “I am unharmed, Captain, though I fear the master of the forge may have a penance²¹ to offer me once he sees what poor care I have taken of my wargear”.

The first tranche of rebels reached the open end of the trap, only to be cut down by the Relictors withering²² onslaught. Before the next, much larger wave could reach them Vidarna reached to his belt and retrieved a grenade.

Vidarna (tossing a grenade): “Cover!”

(explosion killing or wounding several screaming rebels)

Vidarna: “Bollwa! Fessek! Take up the front! Maximae! Assiah! Cover them with me! Move! Now!”

Bollwa and Fessek moved up into the crater left by the blast.

¹⁸ качаться; волноваться; колебаться, сливаться, соединяться, сплетаться

¹⁹ заградительный огонь, огневой вал

²⁰ быстро покрывать какое-л. расстояние

²¹ покаяние, епитимья, раскаяние, искупление, наказание

²² испепелять, вянуть, сохнуть; блёкнуть, чахнуть, ослабевать, слабеть, уменьшаться

Fessek (over vox): “This is relentless²³, Bollwa! Where do they keep coming from?”

Bollwa (over vox): “There is too many of them. One has to abandon cover”.

Even the trees that penned²⁴ the Relictors in no longer offered protection to their side and rear flanks. Rebel troops scaled the thick trunks in an effort to catch the Relictors unawares.

(another side joining the battle)

Vidarna: “Reinforcements, brothers!”

Panic began to spread among the enemy ranks, many of them turning away from the ambushed Space Marines to concentrate their fire on the as yet unseen newcomers. In the space of seconds the tide of battle turned completely. Any rebels not gunned down by the Relictors or their mysterious saviors fled into the forest.

Vidarna: “Leave cover!”

The five grey-armored Space Marines pressed home²⁵ the advantage scything down any retreating woodsman the instant he entered their sights.

Vidarna: “Keep vigilance, brothers. Any of these rebels still inclined to fight, execute them”.

The air was thick with misted blood, such was the ferocity of the Space Marine onslaught and the unmistakable stink of plasma discharge lingered²⁶.

Maximae (over vox): “Captain, dead ahead”.

As one the Relictors’ bolters swung around to target three figures moving through the trees. Two of them had the lumbering²⁷ gait²⁸ of heavy weapons’ servitors: one armed with a plasma cannon, its counterpart fitted with a heavy bolter. Between them was slung a heavy metal crate. The third figure was something else entirely. As he moved closer Vidarna could make out the stranger’s black power armor over which was draped a bone-white robe.

Vidarna: “Those markings. Lower your weapons, brothers. He is no enemy of ours”.

(Relictors lowering their weapons)

²³ безжалостный, жестокий, непреклонный, неослабевающий, беспрестанный

²⁴ запереть, заключать, загонять (скот) в загон

²⁵ выжать до конца, до отказа

²⁶ сохраняться, не полностью исчезать

²⁷ двигающийся тяжело, шумно; неуклюжий, громыхающий

²⁸ походка; поступь

Vidarna: “Well met, Dark Angel. Your intervention is as welcome as it is unexpected. Where is the rest of your squad?”

The Dark Angel halted no more than two meters from Vidarna and looked at each of the Relictors in turn as if appraising²⁹ them.

Asmodai: “I am here alone on a mission of vital import to my Chapter. A similar mission to the one I believe you are on”.

The Dark Angels’ reputation for clandestineness³⁰ was well earned, but almost matched by their ability to uncover secrets.

Vidarna’s bolter rose by just a fraction.

Vidarna: “And are you here to stop us, Chaplain?”

Asmodai: “On the contrary, brother Relictor. I am here to assist you or, more accurately, you are here to assist me”.

Vidarna: “I don’t understand. If you seek the same... object... as we do, then you must realize why we could never allow it to fall into hands of another Chapter”.

Once again all five bolters trained on the Dark Angel.

Asmodai: “Too late for that, Captain. Your quarry³¹ is no longer in possession of the object as you called it, and hasn’t been for quite some time”.

Vidarna: “And how do you know this?”

Asmodai: “Because I have it”.

The Dark Angel did not allow his gaze to fall from the Relictors’ Captain as he gestured to the metal crate being held by the servitors.

Asmodai: “Right here”.

Vidarna: “If you already have it, why do you need our aid?”

Asmodai: “The traitor who leads the rebellion... He wears black armor?”

Vidarna: “We have yet to see him with our own eyes, but the Astra Militarum field reports indicate that the rebels are led by a figure in dark power armor”.

Asmodai: “And that armor bears the markings of one the Legions of old?”

Vidarna: “It would appear that you already know the answer to that, brother Chaplain. But yes, it does”.

Asmodai: “Then I require your aid in capturing him, so that I may deliver him to my Chapter for interrogation. In return I shall give you what you desire”.

²⁹ оценивать, расценивать, производить оценку; устанавливая цену

³⁰ тайный, скрытый, секретный; нелегальный

³¹ добыча; преследуемый зверь, намеченная жертва

Vidarna: “And how do we know that you will keep your end of the bargain? How do we even know that the box contains what you say it does?”

Asmodai: “You don’t. You’ll just have to trust me. The traitor must be taken alive at all costs even if that means laying down your own lives to ensure that. Do that for me and you will have the object along with the gratitude of the Dark Angels. What say you, Relictor? Do we have a deal?”

Vidarna: “Aye, Chaplain. We have a deal”.

* * *

(Asmodai drilling prisoner’s body)

Asmodai had been about his bloody business for days, inflicting pain to his prisoner unlike any he had felt during his near ten thousand years of existence.

(prisoner moaning from pain)

In that time wounds had been opened, healed and reopened. Bones had been shattered and twisted, the traitor Space Marine’s physiology rapidly repairing them, so that Asmodai could break them again and again. For the first time in hours the Dark Angel granted the prisoner some respite³², turning his back on the shackled figure to select his next implement of torment from the array within the chamber.

Prisoner (moaning): “What... What is it that you want from me?”

Asmodai picked up a long thin blade and took three large strides across the room. With his free hand he clasped the back of the traitor’s neck at the top of the spine digging his fingers into a nerve cluster that completely numbed the right side of his body, but magnified the sensation of pain on the left side tenfold.

Asmodai: “When the time comes I will ask you one question and one question only”.

The Chaplain took the blade and inserted it between the thumb and forefinger of the prisoner’s left hand, slowly sliding it deeper.

(prisoner moaning from pain)

Asmodai: “In the meantime I will ensure that when you answer nothing but the truth shall pass your lips”.

* * *

The six Space Marines moved quietly through the trees, alert for lookouts³³ posted high above them. The darkness of their armor helped

³² передышка

³³ наблюдательный пункт, наблюдатель; дозорный; вахта, дозорное судно

them to blend in with the benighted forest floor and their keen vision enabled them to spot the sentries long before they themselves were detected, a swiftly and accurately thrown combat knife ensuring that the alarm was never raised.

Since the agreement there had been little talk and the taciturn³⁴ Chaplain had revealed nothing else about himself. Even his name remained a secret. The most the Relictors had heard him speak was when they came across one of the rebel survivors of the ambush slowly bleeding out through an abdomen³⁵ wound. Despite being faced by six genetically engineered warriors he had been reluctant to divulge³⁶ anything useful, but after a few minutes with the Dark Angel he had not only revealed the location of the rebels' forest base and force disposition, but also confirmed that the traitor Space Marine was held up there.

Vidarna: "How much further, Dark Angel? The sun will rise soon and rob us of the cover of darkness"

Asmodai: "The camp is nine kilometers to the east".

The Chaplain pointed into the distance with his combat knife, its blade slick with the blood of the rebel he had interrogated.

Asmodai: "Even at sprint we shall not beat the break of dawn, but the element of surprise will still be ours".

The closer they got to their target, the more the trees began to thin out. In place of watchmen high up in the tree line foot patrols became their greatest threat of detection, blades now employed to slit throats at close range to keep the advantage of surprise on their side for as long as possible.

When they finally came upon the enemy base just as the first rays of morning light filtered down through the trees, it was exactly as the interrogated prisoner had described it; a former woodcutter's camp. The compound³⁷ perimeter was reinforced by hundreds of felled trees stacked to form thick walls more than ten meters high. The sole point of entry to the prefabricated buildings within was a large metal gate cobbled³⁸ together from panels from the huge logging trucks that transported timber to the moon's space port. Gun nests sat atop either gate post. Las cannon teams scanned the surrounding forest for signs of enemy assault.

³⁴ молчаливый; неразговорчивый

³⁵ брюшная полость; живот

³⁶ разглашать, раскрывать, обнаруживать

³⁷ строение, структура, огороженная территория; лагерь для военнопленных

³⁸ делать кое-как, на скорую руку

Vidarna: “As we agreed”.

The Dark Angel and Relictors nodded. The Captain had formulated a plan of attack based on the information gleaned³⁹ from the rebel.

(Relictors opening fire)

Assiah and Fessek sprinted from out of cover whilst the other Space Marines raged the gatepost’s turrets with a storm of bolt shells. Neither las cannon returned fire, their operators reduced to nothing more than ruined corpses in the wake of such a sudden and ferocious assault. The other gun nests reacted, but too late. The pair of Relictors reached the gates and scaled them, punching through the salvaged metal to form handholds. Quickly reaching the top of the wall they too opened up with their own bolters, nullifying the next closest turrets, allowing the other three Relictors and the Dark Angel Chaplain safe passage.

While Assiah and Fessek took care of the threat atop the wall, the others climbed the gate dropping down into the compound below, where rebels swarmed from their billets⁴⁰ roused by the noise of combat. Their numbers already diminished from the failed ambush, the rebels were unable to mount any kind of serious defense. With the outer wall breached the thin metal huts provided no protection at all. Those too cowardly come out and face their aggressors were slaughtered where they were.

Vidarna: “Brother Maximae!”

Maximae (over vox): “Over there... The traitor!”

An armored figure ducked back behind the building it was using as cover. The Dark Angel and the Relictors found their own sanctuary taking up position behind surrounding structures.

Vidarna: “Maximae!”

Maximae (moaning): “Thigh wound... I may lose the leg, but it won’t kill me (after a pause). Can you see him, Captain?”

Vidarna: “No, brother”.

Maximae: “Leave me behind, complete the mission!”

The Relictor Captain ran to the shelter of the next building. The shots came as if from nowhere catching Vidarna out in the open. The first two passed by, the third caught him square on the pauldron spinning him into the side of the hut he was heading to. The Dark Angel taking cover behind the opposite building looked over at Vidarna, left arm hanging limply at his side.

³⁹ тщательно подбирать, собирать; раздобывать (сведения)

⁴⁰ помещение для постоя

Vidarna: “I am fine. The other took the front of it”.

Up ahead a dark shape darted⁴¹ between buildings before he had time to react.

Vidarna (over vox): “Assiah, Fessek! Can you see him?”

The two Relictors had remained on top of the wall to cover the attack on the base.

Assiah (over vox): “No, Captain!”

Fessek (over vox): “No, Captain!”

Vidarna (over vox): “It’s no good. He is using the cover to his advantage. He can wait for us to show ourselves and take pick us off one by one”.

Asmodai (over vox): “Than let us remove that advantage, Captain”.

In one smooth motion the Chaplain took the Crozius Arcanum from where it was hanging at his waist, powered it up and swung it through the walls of the hut he was using as cover, collapsing one end of the structure before advancing and doing the same at the other end. Quickly realizing the Dark Angel’s strategy Vidarna and Bollwa did likewise, the Captain readying up his ancient chainsword, the larger Relictor simply using his bare hands to tear down the flimsy⁴² booths⁴³.

Fessek (over vox): “He is on the move! To your left, Captain!”

Fessek followed up his warning with shots to pinpoint the traitor’s position to his brothers and the Dark Angel down below. Sprinting along one of the alleys that ran between the huts Vidarna emerged into the junction at the exact same moment as the black-armored heretic. Grimacing through the pain he dropped the shoulder that had been hit earlier and thrust it into the onrushing traitor’s midriff⁴⁴, bringing himself upright and using his enemy’s own momentum against him. Spinning on his heel Vidarna thrust downwards with his chainsword to where he expected his prone⁴⁵ opponent’s chest to be, but the traitor had already rolled clear and was rising to his feet.

(traitor roaring and charging Vidarna)

The traitor lunged at Vidarna gripping his throat with one hand while holding the chainsword at bay with the other.

Traitor (growling): “Give my regards to your corpse Emperor, when you join his side”.

⁴¹ рвануться, кинуться, помчаться стрелой

⁴² ломкий, непрочный, хрупкий; тонкий, необоснованный, неосновательный, шаткий

⁴³ киоск; палатка, будка; кабина

⁴⁴ диафрагма, грудобрюшная преграда

⁴⁵ (лежащий) ничком, лицом вниз

The heretic was at least a head taller than the Relictor though he was eye to eye with Vidarna as the Captain's feet were off the ground. Swinging his body from side to side like a child's plaything, the life being choked from him whilst being used as a transhuman shield.

Vidarna (barely able to speak): "Today... is not... that day, heretic filth". Just as Vidarna could feel himself slipping away, the hulking traitor suddenly relinquished⁴⁶ his grip, falling to the ground alongside the Relictor Captain. Quickly regaining his senses Vidarna accepted the proffered hand from his savior and rose to his feet.

Vidarna: "You have my gratitude, Dark Angel".

Asmodai: "No, Captain. It is you who has my gratitude".

The Dark Angel Chaplain placed his armored boot onto the unconscious traitor's back and rolled him over. There emblazoned⁴⁷ on the left pauldron was the symbol he had been expecting to find on the black-armored traitor: an eight-pointed golden star with an eye at its center. The unmistakable icon of the dreaded Black Legion.

* * *

Asmodai: "You kept your end of the bargain, Captain. Now I shall keep mine".

The Chaplain and the Captain stood apart from the rest of the Relictors. Bollwa and Assiah tending to Maximae's wounded thigh, Fessek standing guard over the armorless and bound traitor Space Marine.

(servitors bringing the crate to Vidarna and Asmodai)

Vidarna: "Can I ask how you came to obtain it?"

Asmodai: "You can ask but I will not answer. Suffice⁴⁸ to say that it is rightfully mine to give and rightfully yours to protect. If you know as much about this object as I think you do, then you know how dangerous it is. Do not let it fall into the wrong hands. Am I clear?"

Vidarna nodded his assent⁴⁹ before crouching down in front of the box. He ran his hands over it as if it was the most fragile, most precious thing in the entire Imperium.

Asmodai: "The lock is keyed to specific genetic markers. It will open for you just as it did for me".

The Relictor flipped up⁵⁰ a panel on the lid⁵¹ of the box to reveal a smooth black square. He removed his right gauntlet and placed his

⁴⁶ ослаблять (хватку), разжимать (руки), выпускать (из рук)

⁴⁷ украшать геральдическими символами, эмблемами, расписывать

⁴⁸ быть достаточным, хватать; удовлетворять

⁴⁹ согласие, одобрение, утверждение, разрешение

⁵⁰ подбрасывать в воздухе; метать, переворачивать; перекидывать (резким движением)

⁵¹ крышка

hand upon it, the multiple locks releasing instantly. Vidarna very carefully lifted the lid from the box, his face bathed in the cool blue glow of cryonics, frost riming⁵² his lips and lower jaw. He stared in wonder for what seemed like an aeon⁵³. When he finally snapped out of it, the Dark Angel and the pair of servitors were already making their way through the forest. Just before he disappeared from view the Chaplain turned back.

Asmodai: “Remember, Relictor, you are its guardian now. Under no circumstance is it to be used”.

* * *

It had been weeks since Asmodai had visited the prisoner, but the marks of the last interrogation were still evident. After months of being held captive the Black Legionary’s flesh was almost entirely scar tissue, his limbs distorted⁵⁴ from where his captor had allowed them to reset at awkward angles. Even if the prisoner was capable of escape, his own body would not allow him to get far.

(Asmodai slowly approaching the prisoner)

Asmodai approached the traitor to inspect him, crushing the teeth he had removed to prevent him from biting off his own tongue under interrogation. He lifted the traitor’s chin and took a good look at his face. The traitor stared blankly back through swollen⁵⁵ eyes. Asmodai turned his attention to the container of fluid being pumped intravenously into the traitor’s spinal column⁵⁶, inhibiting⁵⁷ the Catalepsean Node and denying him the ability to sleep or rest.

Satisfied that everything was in order Asmodai made to leave.

Prisoner (moaning): “Ask... me... the question”.

Asmodai (returning back to the prisoner): “Repeat!”

Prisoner: “Ask... me... the question”.

Asmodai: “And you will answer truthfully? If you lie to me, I will keep you in this state forever”.

Prisoner: “I will tell you the truth and then you will kill me?”

Asmodai: “Very well. My question is a simple one: where is Epimetheus?”

Prisoner (laughing): “Ahahahaha...”

Asmodai: “Very well. Rot here for all eternity”.

⁵² покрывать инеем, изморозью; обледеневать

⁵³ бесконечность, вечность

⁵⁴ кривой, перекошенный, искажённый, искривлённый, деформированный; покоробленный

⁵⁵ вздутый, раздутый; опухший

⁵⁶ позвоночник, позвоночный столб

⁵⁷ задерживать, сдерживать, препятствовать, подавлять;

(Prisoner mumbling incomprehensively)

Asmodai: “What was that? I couldn’t hear you”.

(Prisoner mumbling incomprehensively)

(Asmodai taking his leave)

Prisoner (moaning): “You said you would kill me”.

(door closing behind Asmodai)

Prisoner (screaming): “Kill me! Kill me! KILL ME!”