



AN APOCALYPSE AUDIO DRAMA

TRIALS OF AZRAEL

C Z DUNN



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**SCENE ONE - INT. HOLLOWED-OUT
ASTEROID**

**ATMOS: THE FINAL THROES OF A MIGHTY
BATTLE. ONE HUNDRED DEATHWING
TERMINATORS ARE FINISHING OFF THE
REMNANTS OF A CABAL OF CHAOS SORCERORS.
THE SOUNDS OF DEATH CRIES, THE CHATTER
OF BOLTERS AND WARP ENERGY FILL THE AIR.**

In a lifetime that had already spanned more than ten thousand years, Ezekyle Abaddon had made precious few mistakes.

Some argue that he should have carried some of the blame for the death of Horus, but ultimately it was the former Warmaster's over-reaching ambition that led to his demise rather than the actions - or inaction - of any of his lieutenants. Others claim that the twelve failed Black Crusades to his name were all mistakes, though the countless Imperial worlds made ruin and the

millions of souls butchered or enslaved tell a very different story.

The invasion of the Pandorax system and the opening of the Damnation Cache should have left no doubt of Abaddon's martial prowess in the minds of those who followed. An entire system in the heart of Imperial space made the realm of daemons, a gateway from which a full-scale invasion of reality could be launched by the dwellers within the warp.

Though in years to come scholars would debate endlessly the wisdom of such an audacious act and why Abaddon himself had chosen to lead the ground assault on Pythos before the voidwar was concluded, one question above all other remained unanswered.

With tens of thousands of sorcerers, shamans and seers under his command, how was the arrival of the entire Dark Angels Chapter along with a full Brotherhood of Grey Knights not foreseen?

AZRAEL: Gabriel? How goes the day?

GABRIEL: Well, Lord Azrael. The enemy forces are routing and most of the covens have been put to the blade.

Around them, ivory-armoured figures cut merciless swathes through robed figures or vaporised warp fiends with unerring blasts from storm bolters and assault cannons.

**FX - STORM BOLTER AND ASSAULT CANNON
FIRE**

The Dark Angels' intervention had been a timely one. Augmented by elements of Huron Blackheart's Red Corsairs, Abaddon's fleet had come perilously close to destroying the two Imperial flagships, *Revenge* and *Stalwart*, while the rest of the Imperial armada was scattered or drifting at the mercy of Chaos guns. The turning point came when the Red Corsairs vessel *Might of Huron* smashed a tethered asteroid into the aft sections of *Revenge*, opening the ship to the void and allowing the cultists on board to summon daemons directly aboard the stricken ship. Even now, with the entirety of the Dark Angels First Company deployed inside the hollowed-out asteroid, the rest of the Chapter, along with Supreme Grand Master Draigo and a brotherhood of Grey Knights, battled the daemoniac hordes on board *Revenge*.

The vox-link in Azrael's winged helm crackled to life.

DRAIGO: <<Master Azrael, is the asteroid secure?>>

**FX - HEAVY GUNFIRE AND DAEMONIC SHRIEKS
APARENT IN BACKGROUND OF VOX-LINK.**

There was no love lost between the Supreme Grand Masters of the Dark Angels and Grey Knights Chapters and when Draigo had approached Azrael for aid on this mission it was only begrudgingly

granted in light of the grave threat to the wider Imperium.

AZRAEL: Aye. My brothers and I have put paid to the sorcerous cabals, Lord Draigo, though from the sound of things you require assistance on board *Revenge*.

There was a pause, as if the Grey Knight were carefully considering his response.

DRAIGO: <<The Brotherhood would be... grateful for any reinforcements.>>

FX - CRAZED SCREAM OF CULTIST

A cultist, bleeding from the eyes and frothing at the lips, emerged from a throng of robed figures and charged the two Space Marines, blade aloft. Gabriel swatted the man with a swing of an armoured arm sending him flailing into the path of Azrael who cleaved him in twain at the sternum with a flick of his sword.

AZRAEL: I will personally lead a force across. Activate a beacon and we will teleport to your position.

DRAIGO: <<Activated. I look forward to fighting along->>

Azrael cut the vox-link, disinterested in the Grey Knight's platitudes.

AZRAEL: Gabriel. I will take half of the Deathwing over to the *Revenge* with me. Cleanse this den of filth and witchery then follow me across.

GABRIEL: Understood. Squads Isaachar, Jurial, Felrion, Zurias and Castius form up on the Supreme Grand Master and prepare to teleport aboard the *Revenge*. The rest of you, leave no soul alive on board this abomination unless it wears the ivory of the Deathwing.

Azrael and Gabriel raised their twin blades in salute, the dark metal ringing out as they connected.

Fifty Terminator-armoured giants broke off from combat and gathered in a circle around the green-armoured figure of Azrael, short blasts of bolter fire mopping up survivors as they went.

AZRAEL: We have made short work of the enemy's sorcerers, Deathwing, yet the true test still awaits us. The incantations uttered here opened gateways into the very warp itself, and daemons run amok on board the *Revenge*.

The air surrounding the Dark Angels began to glow unnaturally and the scent of sulphur that pervaded in the vast asteroid caverns gave way to a crisp ozone smell.

AZRAEL: Lord Draigo himself has requested the Deathwing's aid and so-

The upper half of the cultist Azrael thought he had just slain began to drag itself forwards, a bloody smear trailing

in its wake. Gabriel swung his sword thrusting the tip through the top of the man's skull but not before he'd been able to utter a few vile syllables.

CULTIST: Fneh gir snat khim.

FX - CRACKLE OF TELEPORTATION FOLLOWED BY RUSH OF AIR FILLING THE VOID VACATED BY AZRAEL AND HALF THE DEATHWING

INT. LOWER DECKS. REVENGE

AZRAEL: -let us show the Grey Knights how the Dark Angels wage war.

For the briefest of moments, the Supreme Grand Master of the Dark Angels was disoriented. He had expected to materialise alongside his Deathwing brothers in the heart of the conflict but instead found himself in a darkened chamber. Something had gone wrong with the teleportation.

He instantly became aware that he was not alone. Slowly, he drew the Sword of Secrets from the scabbard at his side and pointed it firmly at the vague outline of a power-armoured figure on the opposite side of the chamber.

AZRAEL: Who is there? Show yourself.

The figure separated itself from the shadows, the spikes adorning its armour and the decorative arch crowning its helmet resolving out of the gloom.

KHÂRN: Hello, Dark Angel.

FX - CHAINAXE REVVING UP.

The figure continued onwards. Azrael could now make out that the arch above the figure's helmet was incomplete, the two curved pieces of metal like some twisted parody of his own winged helm. He could also tell that the armour was red. Blood red.

KHÂRN: Let me show you how Khârn makes war.

FX - FRENZIED YELL FOLLOWED BY CHAINAXE MEETING SWORDBLADE.

**SCENE TWO - INT. SECONDARY
SENSORIUM CHAMBER. REVENGE.**

**ATMOS: RUMBLE OF ENGINES. SPARKING
OF RUINED VOX ARRAYS, AUSPEXES AND
COGITATORS.**

It was the taste of blood in her mouth that told Junior Tech Adept Enclemita Cheyna she was still alive, though when she realised it wasn't her own blood she almost wished the opposite were true.

FX - SMALL SHRIEK OF HORROR

Giddily, she rose to her feet and surveyed what was left of the secondary sensorium chamber. Most obvious were the corpses, dozens of them scattered like abandoned children's toys including the remains of her master, Magos Westin, whose body was sprawled face down on the auspex array next to where she had been lying. She spat, trying to remove the taste of Westin's vitae from her mouth.

FX - SPITS

The sensor arrays were wrecked. Each one of them was smashed, sparking and far beyond her capability to repair.

What had happened here? Magos Westin had been instructing her in the correct repair ritual for a short range auspex and then...

She remembered.

A ship had emerged from the rear of the Chaos fleet moving at speed towards the *Revenge* and dragging something behind it, something massive. The auspex readings returned that the object in tow was an asteroid but that couldn't be possible. What kind of lunatic rams an Emperor-class warship with a tethered asteroid?

She looked around again at the ruin of the sensorium and its crew. A very effective lunatic, she realised.

The doors to the sensorium were shut. Cheyna tried the control panel but all she got was the futile clicking of buttons that no longer worked. She tried to open the manual override flap but the metal cover had become so warped in the impact that after a couple of minutes she gave up, aware she was chasing a lost cause.

FX - 3 BURSTS OF STATIC

The hiss from the vox array startled

her. It wasn't a random sound, somebody had sent three quick bursts as a test signal. The crew of the secondary sensorium chamber might be dead, but that didn't mean the rest of the crew were. The engines were still running. Perhaps the bridge or one of the other sensoriums was still operational?

With no little effort - Cheyna being only slight of build - she removed the body of the previous vox-operator from his station and put on the headset. Adjusting the mouthpiece she began to spin a brass dial on the console before her, attempting to find an open frequency.

CHEYNA: This is Adept Enclemita Cheyna of the warship *Revenge*. Can anybody hear me? Over.

The vox returned nothing, not even static. Undeterred, she tried again.

CHEYNA: This is Adept Enclemita Cheyna of the warship *Revenge*. Can anybody hear me? Over.

Still nothing. Three more times she tried, each time with the same result. Something was jamming all internal and external vox signals, so how had the signal been sent?

The sub-vox.

The *Revenge* was an Emperor-class warship, one of the oldest known STCs in the Imperium and, though the Adeptus

Mechanicus shipyards could build perfect replicas, not even they knew what all of the systems on board were in place for. Like the sub-vox, as Cheyna and her former master called it.

Working on an entirely different set of frequencies to the vox, only a few units in the sensorium and the bridge were capable of communicating via the sub-vox, rendering it almost useless as it was incapable of broadcasting to other areas of the ship. Some speculated that it was an emergency broadcast channel, others that it was designed to carry data wirelessly around the ship. Regardless of its intended purpose, somebody was now trying to communicate with her on it.

Adjusting yet more dials, Cheyna hailed once more.

CHEYNA: This is Adept Enclemita Cheyna of the warship *Revenge*. Can anybody hear me? Over.

**SCENE THREE - INT. LOWER DECKS.
*REVENGE***

ATMOS: THE SOUND OF A DUEL. CHAINAXE CLASHING WITH POWER SWORD BLADE IN DEADLY COMBAT. THIS SECTION OF THE SHIP IS DESERTED, THE ONLY OTHER SOUND APART FROM BATTLE THE LOW RUMBLE OF ENGINES. UNLESS NOTED, FX NEED TO FOLLOW THE BATTLE AS DESCRIBED.

KHÂRN: What manner of trickery did you use to get me here, Dark Angel?

Khârn swung Gorechild, the ancient chainaxe bequeathed to him by his primarch Angron, in an attempt to take Azrael's head from his shoulders. The Dark Angel ducked under the swipe and brought his blade up, aiming for the World Eater's exposed torso. The Sword of Secrets met the whirring teeth of Khârn's axe and the two Space Marines stood face to face, their locked weapons

the only thing keeping them apart.

AZRAEL: Isaachar? Are you reading me?
Where are you?

FX - STATIC

Azrael opened a vox-link but all he picked up was static.

AZRAEL: Jurial? Felrion? Zurias?
Castius?

No response. The vox was either dead or being jammed.

**FX - CHAINAXE GRINDING AGAINST COLD
STEEL**

KHÂRN: You do not look like a witch-mind to me. Was it your Librarians or Grey Knight allies who dragged me away from the skull harvest to bring me here?

Azrael strained to keep his sword in place; Khârn's fearsome strength augmented by the rage imbued in him by the Blood God. The Dark Angel was forced to take a step backwards.

KHÂRN: No. You are no sorcerer. From the look of your armour and robes I would guess you are a captain. Maybe even Chapter Master. That is good. It has been a long time since I claimed the skull of a Chapter Master.

With a snarl Khârn pushed Azrael back even further, the two ancient weapons coming apart in a shower of sparks.

Lifting the chainaxe over his head with both hands, Khârn chopped down with it, a crimson blur aimed directly at the Dark Angel's head. Azrael narrowly dodged the blow but Khârn followed up with three more, each one connecting with bulkhead instead of ceramite.

The chamber they were duelling in was pitch black, the *Revenge's* power systems likely disabled during the ramming and boarding action, but Azrael's enhanced vision allowed him to see his surroundings clearly. Long tables and benches were set at regular intervals across a tiled floor atop which sat plates covered in half-eaten meals and abandoned cutlery. It was a mess hall, one that had been in use when the assault came.

FX - CRASH OF TABLES BEING TIPPED OVER

As he put distance between himself and Khârn, Azrael tipped over several of the tables, no great obstacles for the World Eater but obstacles nonetheless.

The huge figures began to circle each other, Gorechild roaring impatiently in Khârn's fist.

AZRAEL: I am Supreme Grand Master Azrael. Remember that name, Betrayer. It will be the last one you hear.

KHÂRN: Of course. That ridiculous helmet you wear should have given you away.

The World Eater advanced on Azrael.

KHÂRN: You are not the first Dark Angels Chapter Master to bear that name and neither are you the first I have slain.

AZRAEL: You have yet to kill me, Betrayer.

KHÂRN: Simply a matter of time, I assure you. But before I claim your skull I want you to tell me what I am doing here. Why did you bring me to this place?

Azrael withdrew even further. Khârn kept moving towards him.

AZRAEL: My presence here is as much a mystery as yours, traitor.

KHÂRN: Somebody - or something - has gone to great lengths to ensure that we face each other in this place, at this time. Is that to keep us from taking part in the greater battle for the ship or is it because they expect me to slay you?

AZRAEL: Or I to slay you.

FX - KHÂRN LAUGHS

KHÂRN: We are pawns in somebody else's game here, Dark Angel, and I do not like being played as a pawn. I almost don't want to give them the satisfaction of killing you.

FX - GORECHILD REVS FURIOUSLY

KHÂRN: Almost.

Khârn leapt over the barricade of tables, Gorechild screaming in his hand. Azrael deflected the blow with his sword, driving the chainaxe into the chamber floor which tore open under the grinding teeth. He readied to drive his blade down across Khârn's neck but, with Gorechild still embedded in the deck, the World Eater struck out with his fist, the punch so powerful that it lifted Azrael from the ground and sent him crashing into a table.

Freeing his weapon, Khârn was upon the Dark Angel in an instant and Azrael had to roll aside to prevent the chainaxe from biting into his breastplate. His bloodlust up, Khârn continued to slash down wildly with Gorechild forcing the Dark Angel to remain prone to avoid the blows. Each impact shattered more of the deck, thick cracks crazing through the toughened metal.

The chainaxe snagged once again and Azrael sprang to his feet, wielding the Sword of Secrets two-handed. He thrust it at Khârn, who reacted a fraction too slowly, the blade slicing across the World Eater's forearm. Azrael hadn't drawn blood, but a deep gouge now ran through the red armour.

Enraged, Khârn heaved Gorechild out of the bulkhead and charged the Dark Angel. Strangely, a faint purple glow

emanated from where the axe had torn away the floor. Focusing on the moment, Azrael stood his ground until Khârn was committed to the attack before dodging the lethal axehead in a spinning motion and catching the berserker across the back with the edge of his sword.

This time Azrael did draw blood.

Khârn roared and repeated his charge but it was as ineffective as the first, Azrael ducking the assault this time and scoring a hit on the Traitor Astartes' torso.

The Supreme Grand Master had learned many things during his long years of combat, not least of which was that an angry opponent was a sloppy one but in the case of Khârn the Betrayer, the opposite held true. For ten thousand years the favoured son of the Blood God had followed the Eightfold Path to every corner of the galaxy, a trail of corpses in his wake and countless skulls claimed for the throne of Khorne. Numerous were the opponents who had thought Khârn beaten but just as numerous were the bodies of those who had prematurely celebrated victory over the World Eater.

The more battered and bloody he became, the greater his rage. The greater his rage, the more battered and bloody his enemies became.

Azrael had cut Khârn twice. It was unlikely there would be a third time.

FX - PRIMAL ROAR

Bellowing, Khârn launched himself at Azrael, again keeping Gorechild high until the very last moment. Anticipating the Dark Angel's feint, Khârn swung the chainaxe low, catching Azrael on the side of the knee and shearing away armour. He turned the head outwards on the upstroke, catching Azrael under the chin with the haft before spinning the axe around again to bring it down in a killing stroke. Still gripping his blade with both hands, Azrael brought it up swiftly, turning a mortal blow into a wounding one. Deflecting off the dark metal sword, Gorechild narrowly missed decapitating Azrael, biting instead into ornate pauldron.

FX - CRY OF PAIN FROM AZRAEL

The Supreme Grand Master's arm went limp at his side and he raised the Sword of Secrets in one hand to fend off the next blow from the blood-streaked chainaxe. Gorechild tore yet another chunk from the floor, more diffuse purple light spilling from below.

Relentlessly, Khârn came at Azrael, the Dark Angel desperately parrying the savage swipes as he backed away from his assailant. For every blow that he knocked aside, another made contact, breaking open armour and tearing the flesh beneath. There was no longer opportunity for counter-attack, each

motion of the Dark Angel's sword was a defensive stroke staving off the inevitable.

Aiming low again, Khârn slipped beneath Azrael's guard and Gorechild ate through armour, arterial blood spilling from a wounded thigh. Azrael dropped to one knee and heaved his sword upwards to block yet another potentially killing blow which instead ended up embedded in the deck.

FX - SQUEALING OF CHAINAXE STUCK IN DECK

Struggling to free the chainaxe from the ruined bulkhead, Khârn launched his fist at Azrael, connecting heavily with the Dark Angel's helmeted head.

FX - ARMoured FIST CONNECTING WITH ARMoured HEAD

Khârn raised his fist again but, still struggling to free Gorechild, instead gripped the haft and tugged hard to release the trapped weapon.

Kneeling, bathed in the purple light bleeding through the cracks and rents in the deck, Azrael defiantly raised the Sword of Secrets. Khârn's flank was exposed, the armour already cracked and coated in blood from Azrael's earlier attack. If he could drive the blade in, open the wound up further then even the notorious Khârn the Betrayer could not survive that. But his death wouldn't be instant. He would still be able to free

the chainaxe and Azrael's life would be forfeit regardless. Khârn was not the objective here, aiding the Grey Knights in closing the Damnation Cache and ridding the Pandorax system of Abaddon and his Black Legion was.

As tempting as it was to die a hero's death and be the one to rid the Imperium of Khârn forever, Azrael took the only other option left open to him. He drove his sword point down into the already cracked deck, opening it even further to release more of the unnatural light.

He lifted the sword again in the same instant Gorechild finally broke free and slammed down, this time breaking the bulkhead beneath them completely.

FX - METAL DECK BREAKING OPEN

As Khârn's chainaxe swung harmlessly overhead, Azrael let himself fall.

**SCENE FOUR - INT. THE CORRUPTED
LOWER DECKS OF *REVENGE***

ATMOS: THE ONCE METAL DECKS HAVE BEEN
TURNED TO FLESH. SOUNDS OF BATTLE AND
THE SCREAMS OF THE DYING CAN BE HEARD IN
THE DISTANCE. THIS NEEDS TO BE V.QUIET
AT FIRST, RISING AS AZRAEL COMES TO HIS
SENSES.

CHEYNA: <<(Very faint) This is Adept
Enclemita Cheyna of the warship
Revenge. Can anybody hear me? Over.>>

CHEYNA: <<(Slightly louder) This is
Adept Enclemita Cheyna of the warship
Revenge. Can anybody hear me? Over.>>

CHEYNA: <<(Louder again but still
faint) This is Adept Enclemita Cheyna
of the warship *Revenge*. Can anybody
hear me? Over.>>

The voice roused Azrael back into
consciousness. He checked the chrono

readout on his helmet's internal display to see how long he had been out but the string of digits was nonsense. Either the Lion Helm had been damaged in his fall or something else was interfering with its systems. Judging by his surroundings, he suspected the latter.

Where he might have expected to find the same metal bulkhead as on the deck above, here the material the ship was constructed from had transmuted into flesh. The walls pulsed as if an unseen heart were pumping blood through them and the floor beneath his feet felt tongue-like, spongy and coated in thick, clear fluid. The same purple light he had seen seeping through the cracks above bathed the corridor which ran in both directions as far as his augmented eyes could see.

Experimentally, he tried to move his left arm but a sharp pain told him that he would need the ministrations of one of his Chapter's Apothecaries before that would be possible. Khârn's chainaxe had severed through muscle and tendon, as deep down as the bone.

Using his other arm, he hauled himself to his feet and raised Lion's Wrath, the master crafted combi-weapon slung at his back. He aimed at the ceiling but in place of the hole he had fallen through a huge scab was in its place, pus leaking from its edges.

Seeing the Sword of Secrets lying on the wet floor, Azrael moved to retrieve it but almost collapsed as he put weight on his wounded thigh - something else that would require medical treatment. He put a hand out against the wall to steady himself, the warm fluid pumping through it feeling strange beneath his palm.

CHEYNA: <<This is Adept Enclemita Cheyna of the warship *Revenge*. Can anybody hear me? Over.>>

FX - SHARP BURST OF STATIC

Azrael blink-clicked to activate his armour's vox but received only interference in return. Automatically, the helmet began to scan for a new channel but reported failure with every new frequency it tried. Just when it was about to exhaust all possibilities new lights triggered on the display that Azrael had never seen before and a schematic of the ship appeared just below his field of vision.

He blink-clicked again and a clear channel opened.

AZRAEL: This is Supreme Grand Master Azrael. Receiving. Over.

CHEYNA: <<Oh, thank the Omnissiah I'm not the only one left alive. When I picked up your distress signal I thought->>

AZRAEL: What distress signal? I sent no such message.

CHEYNA: <<I received three bursts of static over the sub-vox network. It's the old method of signalling for help when there's a chance of an enemy intercepting a voice transmission or the main communications networks are down.>>

The Lion's Helm was one of the oldest relics possessed by the Dark Angels and had been worn by their primarch, Lion El'Johnson during the dark days of the Horus Heresy and the fall of Caliban. It was said to have been crafted for him by one of his brother primarchs and though many of its capabilities were known, like its wearer, it retained many secrets. Perhaps once he was clear of the ship and back on board the Rock the Master of the Forge could unlock more of its mysteries. For now, Azrael had more pressing concerns.

AZRAEL: Are you on the bridge, adept? Do you still have control of the ship?

CHEYNA: <<I am in the secondary sensorium. I've been unable to raise the bridge, even on the sub-vox.>>

AZRAEL: What about my Chapter? Have you picked up any communications from them?

CHEYNA: <<Chapter? You are a Space Marine! Oh, sweet God Emperor, we are saved!>>

AZRAEL: That remains to be seen.
I am badly wounded and the being
that caused my wounds still stalks
the corridors of this ship. It is
imperative I rejoin my Chapter.

CHEYNA: <<All vox communication is
down, my lord. Only the sub-vox works
and there are only a handful of units
on board capable of accessing it.>>

None of which were in the possession
of the Dark Angels. Whoever was behind
Azrael's predicament had gone to a lot
of trouble to keep him isolated from the
rest of his Chapter.

CHEYNA: <<Where are you, lord?>>

Azrael dropped his gaze to where the
plan of the ship was projected against
the inside of his helm. Blue lines
denoted the outline of the ship and
delineated the individual decks. A
yellow dot pulsed slowly at the base of
the schematic showing Azrael's position.

AZRAEL: I am on deck 713. I
teleported aboard into some kind of
mess hall but fell through to the
deck below.

CHEYNA: <<I think you fell a lot
farther than a single deck, lord. The
lower decks have not been used for
decades and the nearest mess hall is
on deck 686.>>

Somebody had gone to a *lot* of trouble to
keep him apart from his battle-brothers.

CHEYNA: <<The service elevators should still work though.>>

Azrael turned to look in both directions, the corridor extending like some bizarre throat with no end in sight.

AZRAEL: Unlikely. The ship has been corrupted down here. I doubt it's how you remember it.

CHEYNA: <<Corrupted? In what way?>>

The Supreme Grand Master's long service among the ranks of the Dark Angels had revealed many horrors and taken him to unimaginable battlefields. He had cleansed the foetid corridors of vessels infected by the Plague God, stalked the living halls of tyrannid bioships and set ablaze the pleasure dungeons of the vile dark eldar.

The changes wrought upon the metal of the *Revenge* did not faze him, his mind was conditioned to shun fear in all its forms. The human psyche, fragile and susceptible, did not cope well with anything it could not comprehend. Even if the signs were not overt, knowledge of such unnatural things gnawed away at the soul, its effects manifesting when least expected and least welcomed. The adept was Azrael's only ally; he needed to keep her focused, keep her sane. Likely she had already witnessed dread beyond her ken, revealing what had happened to the lower decks of the ship served no purpose.

There was something else he wasn't telling her too but that could wait.

AZRAEL: That's not important. Keep trying to get the vox operational and I'll try and make it back up through the ship.

CHEYNA: <<But how are you going to do that, lord?>>

Carefully applying his weight, Azrael bent forward and retrieved his sword. One-handed, he thrust it into the ceiling and tore through the flesh.

FX - TEAR OF FLESH

FX - AGONISED SCREAM (DISTANT)

AZRAEL: The hard way.

SCENE FIVE - INT. REVENGE

ATMOS: THE BATTLE IS RAGING ALL AROUND. BOLTER FIRE IS EXCHANGED. KHÂRN STRIDES THROUGH IT ALL, UNCONCERNED.

The three Dark Angels did not know what was happening until it was too late. Pinned down by Black Legionnaires in defensible positions further along the corridor, they had taken to alcoves and doorways, slowly advancing from cover point to cover point, exchanging fire as they went.

FX - CHAINAXE REVVING.

The roar of a chainaxe from behind them drew their attention.

FX - CHAINAXE TEARS THROUGH ARMOUR AND FLESH.

FX - DEATH CRY.

Two halves of the green-armoured figure fell wetly to the ground, his bolter discharging wildly in a spasming hand. One of the stray shots struck Khârn in the hip but he did not falter, swinging Gorechild around again and liberating another Dark Angel of his head.

The third Space Marine, unhelmeted and in the livery of a sergeant, pulled his chainsword free of its scabbard.

FX - THE ROAR OF A CHAINWORD JOINS THE CACOPHONY.

Khârn reacted quickest, severing the Dark Angel's arm at the wrist, sending both fist and sword tumbling to the deck. His next swipe tore up through the stricken Space Marine's torso, opening him up to the chest before one final blow claimed his head.

Khârn was already advancing along the corridor before the corpse hit the floor.

FX - THUD OF ARMOUR HITTING METAL FLOOR.

Ahead of him, the five-man squad of Black Legionnaires stepped out from behind their barricade. Their leader, equal in size and stature to the World Eater, moved towards him, pulling off his helmet to reveal a weathered, lined face beneath. But for the lack of a topknot, facially the Traitor Marine could have been mistaken for Abaddon himself.

SEGGADON: (Laughing) Khârn! It is good to see you again, old friend.

Khârn continued to advance.

SEGGADON: What, do you not recognise me? I'm Seggadon.

If Khârn recognised or remembered the Black Legionnaire, he showed no outward sign.

SEGGADON: We fought alongside each other at Isstvan Three. Again at the Battle for the Emperor's Palace.

Still Khârn continued onwards.

SEGGADON: You must remember. Such sport we made of those Imperial Fists. Why, you alone must have slaughtered-

FX - GORECHILD SPRINGS TO LIFE, RIPS SEGGADON OPEN.

The surviving Black Legionnaires' weapons were trained on the World Eater in an instant. What happened next was bloody and quick.

FX - CHAINAXE, MULTIPLE BOLTERS, PLASMA PISTOL, DEATH CRIES. MILK THIS A LITTLE BIT - FOUR CHAOS MARINES DIE AND KHÂRN TAKES A FEW HITS.

FX - FOOTFALLS SPLASHING THROUGH BLOOD MOVING AWAY INTO THE DISTANCE.

Leaving the corpses of both foe and former ally alike in a rapidly expanding lake of blood, Khârn continued his hunt for Azrael.

The World Eater had promised Khorne the

Supreme Grand Master's skull. Nothing was going to stop him from claiming it.

**SCENE SIX - INT. THE CORRUPTED
LOWER DECKS OF *REVENGE***

**ATMOS: THE ONCE METAL DECKS HAVE BEEN
TURNED TO BONE. SOUNDS OF BATTLE AND THE
SCREAMS OF THE DYING CAN BE HEARD IN THE
DISTANCE.**

FX - LIMPING FOOTSTEPS, ARMOUR ON BONE.

Even with a failing chronometer, Azrael knew that he had been working his way through the ship for hours. At first the going was easy - at least as easy as it could be with a ruined arm and thigh - but, whether by accident or design, the soft flesh that had allowed the Dark Angel to travel up through the first few decks soon gave way to thick bone that even the Sword of Secrets could not carve through. With his upward progress halted, Azrael was forced to walk the ivory corridor looking for another point of egress. The schematic projected in

his helmet denoted he had only reached level 698.

Other than his warped surroundings, there was no sign of any enemy activity this deep in the ship's belly. Sharp protrusions of bone jutted out from the floor at irregular intervals but these were benign and Azrael could hobble past them without trouble. Even the rats and other scavengers he would have expected to have found this far down were notable by their absence.

FX - SCRATCHING NOISE FROM UP AHEAD.

Or were they?

Keeping one hand against the bone wall for support, Azrael unslung Lion's Wrath and pointed it towards the bend from around which the noise emanated. In his wounded state he would not be able to sneak up and surprise whatever awaited him but if it came down to a firefight he would need every advantage he could get.

Slowly, rounding the corner a terrified face stared back at the Space Marine like that of a small rodent caught in the beam of a vehicle searchlight. Hanging one-handed from the corridor wall, a scrawny man in a tattered Cadian Imperial Guard uniform looked upon Azrael with an expression that was equal parts awe and terror. He was young by human standards, certainly no more than thirty, and in his free hand he held a small knife, the tip of which had snapped off.

AZRAEL: Put down your weapon.

The knife was no threat to the Dark Angel but until he knew what he was dealing with, he would rather the man be unarmed. Several seconds passed during which nothing happened. By way of persuasion, Azrael raised the barrel of his weapon and pointed it at the Cadian's head.

FX - CLANG OF KNIFE DROPPING TO THE FLOOR.

AZRAEL: Who are you and what are you doing down here? These decks are supposed to be abandoned.

The man's mouth opened and closed several times, as if he were mimicking some kind of ocean-bound creature but no sound emerged.

Azrael motioned with Lion's Wrath to add some extra persuasion.

JOB: My... my name is Jobe, lord. I... I live down here.

AZRAEL: How can you live down here if these decks are abandoned?

Jobe managed to pull his gaze away from the armoured giant before him, dropping his eyes towards the floor.

Azrael limped closer, gun still trained on the man.

AZRAEL: Answer me, damn you.

Jobe let go of the thick bone he was

gripping and fell to his knees weeping.

JOBE: Please, lord. You have to understand. I'm not like you. I'm not brave, I wasn't bred for fighting. They shipped us off, wouldn't even tell us where we were going. Thousands of us, cooped up in here like cattle.

AZRAEL: You're a deserter.

JOBE: I'm not proud of myself, lord. As soon as we entered the warp headed for Pandorax I took the first chance I could to get out of the regiment. Made my way down here and scavenged what I could until... until...

AZRAEL: I should execute you right here.

FX - SCARED WHIMPER FROM JOBE.

The sub-vox link hissed open.

CHEYNA: <<Still no luck with the vox, my lord.>>

This was the third time the adept had checked in since their initial contact. Perhaps she was just being thorough or eager to impress but Azrael suspected it was because she wanted to make sure he hadn't abandoned her.

FX - SOBBING FROM JOBE.

CHEYNA: <<Is somebody with you? Have you found more survivors?>>

AZRAEL: Just one. Imperial Guard.

Claims to have deserted and sought refuge down here.

CHEYNA: <<I'm surprised you've not found more of them, lord. Hundreds of them deserted the minute they got on board, even more when we entered the warp. Space travel does strange things to a man's mind. It can turn even the greatest hero into a coward.>>

AZRAEL: A coward is still a coward. Keep trying the vox and let me know the moment you get it operational.

CHEYNA: <<Acknowledged, lord.>>

FX - CRACKLE OF VOX CUTTING OUT.

Azrael knew that the chances of the adept getting the vox working again were slim. If the asteroid impact had not taken out the comms towers then it was likely the ship's communications were being jammed. Until the Dark Angels and Grey Knights retook the ship, that situation was unlikely to change. Azrael had ordered her to try and get it working for a different reason - it gave her purpose and prevented her from discovering how grave her situation really was.

AZRAEL: What were you doing just now before I found you?

JOBE: Lord...?

AZRAEL: With the knife. You had

climbed up the wall and were doing something with your blade.

JOBE: There was a crack in a section of bone. I was trying to prise it open and climb through to the deck above.

Azrael looked up. The fissure was no wider than one of his fingers but more than big enough to accommodate his sword tip.

AZRAEL: On your feet.

Jobe looked up, startled.

AZRAEL: I said, on your feet.

The Cadian slowly lifted himself from the ground, eyeing the Space Marine warily.

JOBE: You're... you're not going to execute me?

Azrael released his grip on Lion's Wrath which fell to his side suspended from his shoulder by its thick leather strap. He pulled the Sword of Secrets from its scabbard.

FX - SWORD BEING DRAWN.

AZRAEL: I am not going to execute you. Provided you survive long enough for the ship to be liberated I will hand you over to the custody of your regiment. If one of your superior officers or a commissar decides to put a bolt round through your skull then that is their business.

Azrael drove the blade up hard into the crack in the ceiling, splitting the bone which cascaded to the floor.

FX - BONE SHATTERING.

AZRAEL: Now come. We have some climbing to do.

SCENE SEVEN - INT. *REVENGE*

**ATMOS: THE THICK OF BATTLE. KHÂRN
CONTINUES HIS BLOODY RAMPAGE.**

Khornate cultists traded shots with the remnants of Imperial Guard regiments and crew members who had taken up arms in defence of the *Revenge*. In the tight confines of the ship's corridors there was no escape on either side from the barrage and scores of bodies already littered the deck. The forces converged on each other, the combat becoming close quarters and intense, knives drawn from within the folds of robes, rifles used as impromptu clubs.

In full killing frenzy, the cultists revelled in the slaughter, the deck painted crimson with their enemies' blood, the screams of the butchered like music to their ears. A new instrument of

death joined their chorus, its player a virtuoso in the art of murder.

FX - CHAINAXE GETTING CLOSER.

The Chosen of Khorne waded into the melee and, for the briefest of moments, the cultists were glad to have him at their side, the fate of their foes irrevocably sealed by the presence of the World Eater.

FX - CHEERING, LIKE THAT OF A RIOTING MOB.

Their joy soon gave way to terror as Khârn ploughed through the throng, Gorechild's thirst sated by the blood of friend and foe alike as it indiscriminately tore bodies apart. Like his patron, Khârn cared not from whence the blood flowed.

FX - NOISE OF THE CHAINAXE BUILDS TO A CRESCENDO, AS DO THE SCREAMS. AGAIN, MILK THIS.

Left to their own devices, the two sides could have battled for the better part of an hour, attrition eventually granting the victory to whoever could outlast the other. Thanks to Khârn's intervention, it lasted less than a minute.

FX - MOANS OF A SINGLE DYING MAN.

Drenched from head to foot in gore the same colour as the armour beneath, Khârn advanced towards the lone survivor. A

cultist, both legs severed beneath the knee, had dragged himself along the corridor, a thick crimson smear in his wake. He had come to rest beneath the number seven hundred and two stencilled in black on the bare metal bulkhead where he was slowly bleeding out.

CULTIST: Wh.. why? We follow... the same path. My devotion is only... only to the Blood God.

KHÂRN: Khorne does not want your devotion, wretch.

FX - CHAINAXE REVVING.

KHÂRN: Only your skull.

The massacre complete, Khârn continued his pursuit of Azrael.

FX - ARMoured FOOTSTEPS HEADING INTO THE DISTANCE.

**SCENE EIGHT - INT. THE CORRUPTED
LOWER DECKS OF *REVENGE***

ATMOS: AS SCENE SIX

AZRAEL: To which regiment do you
belong, trooper?

Their ascent up through the transfigured lower decks of the *Revenge* had been slow going. Azrael's wounded thigh - while healing rapidly thanks to his Space Marine physiology - had slackened his pace and the weak points in the bone structure were few and far between. Since he had encountered Jobe, they had only managed to climb up two more levels. Other than giving him orders, these were the first words the Dark Angel had spoken to the Cadian in that time.

JOBE: The Cadian 5th Artillery
Regiment, lord.

AZRAEL: Are you blooded? Have you seen battle yet?

JOB: Yes, lord. As a younger man, in the Whiteshields. I fought against an Archenemy raiding party that had made planetfall on the northern continent of Cadia.

AZRAEL: That must be a common occurrence so close to the Maelstrom.

Jobe halted and turned to look up at the Space Marine.

JOB: Surely you mean the Eye of Terror, lord? Cadia sits on the fringes of the Eye in Segmentum Obscurus. Were you testing me?

Azrael said nothing and limped onwards. The adept, Cheyna, had told him that there were likely hundreds of Imperial Guard deserters on the lower decks yet in all the hours he had been down there he had encountered only Jobe. The man had exhibited no signs of being anything other than what he said he was but whoever had ensured that Azrael's teleportation had gone awry and had delivered him up to Khârn was obviously the bearer of great power. The Lord of the Dark Angels was not taking any chances.

**SCENE NINE - INT. SECONDARY
SENSORIUM CHAMBER. REVENGE.**

**ATMOS: RUMBLE OF ENGINES. SPARKING
OF RUINED VOX ARRAYS, AUSPEXES AND
COGITATORS. BEEPING OF INSTRUMENT
PANELS.**

FX - GENTLE SOBBING

Enclemita Cheyna stared at the ship schematic projected before her, a tear rolling down her cheek.

She had been trying for hours to get the vox operational again and, after stripping the unit down and rebuilding it again twice - chanting the correct litanies and applying the prescribed unguents, naturally - had come to the conclusion that the unit itself was fine and it was the signal that was somehow being jammed. With that knowledge, she had set to work on trying to get some of the other systems functioning again

with varying degrees of success. Both the short and long range auspexes were beyond repair, probably the result of external sensors being shorn off during the asteroid impact, but she had managed to get the engine power and temperature gauges up and running again, for what they were worth.

Unnervingly, the dead eyes of the sensorium's former crew had stared at her through the entire process so before she had embarked upon her next patch-up job, she had dragged their bodies to the far end of the sensorium and covered their faces with blood-stained tunics.

Though the destruction wrought upon the ship and its ancient systems had caused her the greatest distress, she felt oddly saddened by the loss of human life. She had not felt particularly close to any of the crew but they had always treated her with kindness, something she wanted to reciprocate now that they were dead. Her hope was that once the ship was back under Imperial control there would be the chance to repatriate their bodies to Gaea and give them a formal burial in the Navy cemetery.

Once she had played around with the sub-vox and brought up the schematic she knew exactly how vain that hope was.

She had lost track of how long she had sat there just staring at the flickering

projection, processing her situation and trying to find some way out of it but there was none. All she could do now was wait and die.

But that did not mean she had to waste whatever time was left to her. If she could get more of the sensorium's systems on-line again then she could still be of aid to Lord Azrael.

FX - METAL COVER BEING PULLED AWAY AND DROPPED TO THE GROUND. TEARING OF WIRES.

Wiping dry her cheeks, she tore away an instrument panel and began to strip the bundles of wires beneath.

**SCENE TEN - INT. THE CORRUPTED
LOWER DECKS OF *REVENGE***

ATMOS: AS SCENE SIX

JOBE: This way leads to the engines, lord. If we can make it there then we should be able to ascend to whichever deck we choose. If these... changes are only affecting the lower portion of the ship then we may even find a working service elevator once we reach a higher level.

The ivory monotony of the tunnel-like corridors had finally been broken by a junction, hollow bone leading off to all four points of the compass. Jobe was standing at the mouth of the right-hand branch, his body language urging Azrael to follow him.

The Dark Angel consulted the schematic, manipulating it with eye movement to flatten out the three-dimensional image

and present him with an overview of the deck. Jobe's information was correct, his proposed route led directly to the engines.

AZRAEL: What makes you think that it is only the lower part of the ship that has been warped by the Dark Powers?

JOB: I... I... just assumed that because you were heading up through the ship that you were heading for an unaffected area.

Jobe turned and started in the direction of the engines.

JOB: Please, Lord Azrael. There could be anything lurk-

FX - LOUD DISCHARGE OF A PLASMA WEAPON.

Lion's Wrath burst to life in the Dark Angel's hand, the superheated bolt of plasma scoring a hole clean through the Cadian's back and out through the other side. The man stood there for a moment looking down at the gaping hole, bloody steam rising from the ruins of heart, lungs and other vital organs. Slowly, he turned to face Azrael.

JOB: What gave me away?

AZRAEL: You called me 'Lord Azrael'. I never told you my name, daemon.

JOB: And what makes you so sure that I'm a daemon, Dark Angel?

AZRAEL: Because that body you are possessing is lacking at least four of the organs necessary for its continued existence and yet it is somehow still speaking to me.

The thing that was once Jobe placed its hand in the void at its chest, expanding its fingers and moving them around. It pulled them away coated in thick, dark fluid.

AZRAEL: Now, who are you and what do you want with me?

Azrael's relic combi-weapon was still trained on the walking corpse.

JOB: I thought what I want with you is obvious, Dark Angel. I want you dead. Did you think I offered you up to Khârn to trade war stories and offer each other weapon maintenance tips?

The Jobe-thing smiled, obviously impressed at its own joke.

JOB: I want to flense the skin from your dead bones and wear it over my own. I want to sup the wine of dreams from your hollowed-out skull. I want to prise that sword of yours from mortised hands and use it to slay every last one of your brethren.

AZRAEL: Don't make me ask again. Who are you?

JOB: Perhaps I'm one of your Fallen,

Dark Angel, finally granted the gift of daemonhood for all my millennia of loyal service? Or maybe I'm one of the voices that whispered to Luther all those years ago on Caliban, telling him of the Lion's contempt for him and setting him on the true path. What if I still talk to him? Feeding him false information to pass on to you when you have your cosy chats deep in that dungeon in which you keep him. What if I am him? Freed of my shackles at some point later in time but manipulating the warp to have my revenge on my tormentors. That would be poetic, wouldn't it, Dark Angel? The original Angel of Vengeance taking his reprisal on those no longer fit to bear the name.

The possessed Cadian's smile dropped, his features taking on a sinister aspect.

JOB: Maybe none of these things are true, perhaps they all are. That's the thing with identities - if I have to have one, better it be-

FX - DISCHARGE OF PLASMA WEAPON FOLLOWED BY CORPSE HITTING THE FLOOR.

AZRAEL: You talk too much, daemon.

Free of the daemon's possession, Jobe's corpse shrivelled and wrinkled, drying to a husk in mere moments.

JOB: (Disembodied) He's coming for

you, Dark Angel. Not long now. Khârn has the scent of your blood in his nostrils and will stop at nothing until your skull hangs from his belt.

Kicking Jobe's corpse out of the way, Azrael set off in the direction of the ship's engines.

**SCENE ELEVEN - INT. THE
ENGINEHOUSE OF THE *REVENGE***

**ATMOS: LOUD BASS RUMBLE OF STARSHIP
ENGINES**

**FX - UNSETTLING SQUEAL OF A NURGLING
DYING.**

The nurgling perished on the end of Justicar Kersai's halberd, the crackling tip of the weapon impaling the beast and lifting it from the gantry. Swinging the polearm around, the Grey Knight threw the beast's body down into the deep void that ran along the rear of the ship housing the sub-warp engines.

**FX - ARMoured FOOTSTEPS CLANGING ALONG
THE GANTRY GETTING CLOSER.**

Wiping the sickly ichor from the blade of his weapon, Kersai became aware of the presence of another on the steel walkway. Disturbingly, the psyker's warp

gifts had not alerted him, the sound of footsteps being the first indicator of somebody approaching.

Snapping his head upwards a sight that all loyal servants of the Adeptus Astartes are trained to recognise greeted him.

FX - CHAINAXE REVS UP

Caked in dried blood and filth, Khârn raised Gorechild and charged the Grey Knight. The silver-clad Space Marine raised his halberd, directing a powerful blast of psychic energy at the onrushing World Eater.

FX - CRACKLE OF PSYCHIC ENERGY

The stream of blue warp lightning washed over Khârn. Either choosing to ignore the pain or impervious to it, still he came. The Grey Knight renewed his assault, putting so much of his being into the power emanating from his force halberd that hoarfrost coated his suit of Terminator armour and dark blood leaked from both nostrils.

The effect was the same. His red armour glowing purple under the crackling wave of sapphire energy, Khârn did not falter.

KERSAI: No... This cannot be.

Resorting to more base tactics, Kersai raised his weapon to use it in the conventional manner but the World Eater

was already upon him. A huge fist pounded into the psyker's unprotected face, rearranging his features to such an extent that even the brothers who served beneath him would no longer recognise their justicar.

KHÂRN: Khorne protects me, Grey Knight.

FX - CHAINAXE REVVING, TEARING THROUGH ARMOUR, FLESH AND BONE.

KHÂRN: Unlike your corpse-Emperor.

Gorechild bit deep into the suit of Terminator plate, carving through the flesh and bone beneath and spraying its wielder with yet more blood. Hardly breaking stride, Khârn surged onwards as the Grey Knight's constituent parts dropped away into the dark depths of the engine house.

Reaching the wide set of metal ladders at the end of the gantry, Khârn descended yet deeper into the *Revenge* unrelenting in pursuit of his quarry.

FX - FOOTSTEPS GROWING FAINTER AS KHÂRN CLAMBERS DOWN THE LADDER.

**SCENE TWELVE - INT. THE CORRUPTED
LOWER DECKS OF *REVENGE***

ATMOS: AS SCENE SIX

CHEYNA: <<I have more of the systems back online, lord. The life support systems are up and running across the upper half of the ship and I have body heat detectors operational on all decks.>>

AZRAEL: And the vox?

CHEYNA: <<The signal is being jammed but I think you knew that already, lord.>>

AZRAEL: Really?

Azrael came to another junction and stopped to consult the schematic.

AZRAEL: What makes you say that?

CHEYNA: <<Because I also accessed the ship schematic via the sub-vox.>>

The Dark Angel said nothing. Picking one of the branches in the corridor he began to limp along it, arm held out against the wall to help support his weight.

CHEYNA: <<Why didn't you tell me?>>

AZRAEL: Would it have made any difference to your situation?

CHEYNA: <<I would have known.>>

AZRAEL: And that knowledge would have altered nothing. All routes to the secondary sensorium were severed when the asteroid hit. The damage to the surrounding areas was catastrophic. It's a miracle you're alive.

CHEYNA: <<Some miracle - doomed to die a slow death as the oxygen supply runs out.>>

[PAUSE]

<<You have no intention of rescuing me, do you?>>

AZRAEL: My mission is to ensure the Revenge is cleansed. Your area of the ship is inaccessible to both Imperial and enemy forces. Once our primary objective is achieved then we can look at the options of rescuing stranded crew.

FX - STATIC

AZRAEL: Adept Cheyna?

CHEYNA: (Very definitely changing the subject) <<I've patched the body

heat detectors through to the sub-vox schematic. I may not be able to differentiate between friendly and hostile forces but at least I can give you a heads up when you're approaching somebody. Which deck are you on now?>>>

AZRAEL: I'm still on seven hundred. I just came to a junction and continued towards the engines.

CHEYNA: <<Stay on that heading. There's nothing towards the aft of that level but the sensors are showing multiple returns towards the fore.>>

AZRAEL: Acknowledged.

Killing the sub-vox link, Azrael continued slowly towards his objective.

SCENE THIRTEEN - INT. THE CORRUPTED LOWER DECKS OF *REVENGE*

ATMOS: AS SCENE SIX

Despite having not killed for what felt to Khârn like an unbearable age, his choler was undiminished. Azrael was close, so close that the tang of blood hung on the stale air, the spoor of the Dark Angel's wounds as clear as footprints to the World Eater.

Coming to a junction in the smooth bone corridor, Khârn spotted what at first appeared to be nothing more than a bundle of rags. As he moved closer he saw that the torn and filthy material, remnants of an Imperial Guard uniform, clothed a desiccated corpse. Crouching down, he placed a hand on the rent gouged in the cadaver's chest. Even through his gauntlets Khârn could feel the heat from the plasma burst that had

punched through the dead man's chest. He had no idea what had caused the body to decompose so quickly but that was of no concern to him in his heightened state of bloodlust.

Azrael was near.

The hunt was almost at an end.

**SCENE FOURTEEN - INT. THE
CORRUPTED LOWER DECKS OF *REVENGE***

ATMOS: AS SCENE SIX

CHEYNA: <<Lord Azrael?>>

AZRAEL: Yes, adept?

CHEYNA: <<Have you reached the
engines yet?>>

AZRAEL: No.

CHEYNA: <<Oh. Even at your reduced
pace you should have reached them
by now. Did you take a wrong turn,
perhaps?>>

AZRAEL: I took no wrong turn. I know
exactly where I am headed.

CHEYNA: <<Are you certain?>>

AZRAEL: Absolutely. I am very nearly
at my objective.

CHEYNA: <<How close are you? Can you hear the engines yet?>>

AZRAEL: The engines are not my objective.

CHEYNA: <<But you said...>>

AZRAEL: The engines are not my objective. You are, daemon.

The smooth white of the tunnel opened out into an expansive chamber, once used to house ordnance for the *Revenge's* fearsome array of weaponry but now co-opted as a den for one of the neverborn. The walls shone with a pearlescent gleam, shapes swirling and forming on its surface like ghosts trapped beneath ice.

Azrael's tormentor stood hunched in the centre, its gigantic avian form clutching a grotesque staff, a bulbous blinking eye set into its shaft. Its beaked head shook from side to side if in the grip of some nervous tic and its coat of blue and purple feathers bristled when it caught sight of the Dark Angel on the threshold of its domain.

DAEMON: What gave me away this time?

AZRAEL: I switched off the sub-vox hours ago yet still the girl was able to communicate with me. Unless she was holding back that she was a psyker it had to be you. Is she real, or just a construct of yours to help lead me to Khârn?

DAEMON: Oh, she's real. She's sitting there right now scared out of her mind, waiting to die. You were her only hope and she'll go to her grave knowing that you abandoned her. And you were wrong, by the way.

AZRAEL: About what, daemon?

DAEMON: That there was no way to reach her. The Black Legion have found a way through. Even now three of their number are on their way up there to send her to that grave a little quicker. I'm sure slow asphyxiation will have felt like the pleasant alternative once they're through with her. Now tell me, Azrael, how did you find me?

AZRAEL: For a follower of the Lord of Lies your tactics are quite blunt. You did everything you could to keep me away from this end of the ship.

DAEMON: Merely leading you to Khârn, Dark Angel.

AZRAEL: Why him? He seemed as puzzled as I that he had become embroiled in your scheme.

DAEMON: The Four play their game on a cosmic scale and even I am but a pawn. Pacts have been made, deals have been closed. Somebody who is no longer in a position to claim your life for himself made a bargain. One of the conditions is that Khârn will

be the one to claim your skull. The rest of you is to be left to me to do with as I please.

The daemon stalked towards Azrael, tottering uneasily on its clawed feet.

DAEMON: But the terms of the compact are subject to alteration as circumstances dictate. Khârn is not here to slay you. I am.

Belying its awkwardness and bulk, the daemon was upon Azrael in an instant, staff raised to strike the Dark Angel down.

AZRAEL: I don't think so, Du'ka'leth.

At the mention of its true name, the daemon froze rigid, rooted to the spot like some bizarre living statue.

AZRAEL: You are the only thing that will be slain today.

DAEMON: But how? My trap was perfect. I caught you unawares, isolated you both from your own brothers and those accursed daemon hunters. You cannot know my true name. It is impossible!

AZRAEL: And yet here you are, bound to my will.

DAEMON: This is some kind of trick. I know you will stop at nothing to get your hands on your Fallen ancestors. You must have entered into a pact with one of my rivals, bartered the souls of your Chapter in exchange for knowledge.

**FX - VOX CRACKLE. MULTIPLE MESSAGES
OVERLAID ON ONE ANOTHER.**

With the daemon's power held in check, the sorcery he had employed to jam the vox network dispelled. Azrael's helmet filled with the frantic exchanges of his Chapter at war. For the moment he ignored them.

AZRAEL: This is no trick. I made no bargains with your treacherous ilk. Do you think that Draigo and his Grey Knights are the only ones who know the value and power of a true name? I have access to all of the secrets of my Chapter. Its entire knowledge is laid open to me and every minute I am not at war is time I spend expanding that knowledge, arming my mind for the wars yet to come. Your name has been known to the Dark Angels for a very long time, daemon. Supreme Grand Master after Supreme Grand Master has memorised it in the hope that this day would come.

DAEMON: But how could you know that the name belonged to me?

AZRAEL: Like I told you earlier, you talk too much, daemon.

DAEMON: What does that mean?

AZRAEL: You told me that you were one of the daemons who corrupted Luther on Caliban, that you still speak to him.

DAEMON: And? What of it?

Azrael leaned in closer to the trapped daemon.

AZRAEL: You forgot that Luther still speaks to me.

The daemon's eyes grew wider in shock.

AZRAEL: He told me how to recognise you in all your forms, to know all of your names, all of your methods. It was Luther who gave me the very weapon with which to defeat you.

DAEMON: Then be done with it! Speak my name again and send me back into the warp or drive me through with that weapon of yours.

AZRAEL: I don't think so, daemon.

Azrael blink-clicked open a vox link.

FX - FIZZ OF STATIC

AZRAEL: Gabriel?

GABRIEL: <<Lord Azrael? We thought you dead. What happened?>>

AZRAEL: No time for that now, brother. Do you have a fix on my position?

GABRIEL: <<Affirmative.>>

AZRAEL: Then teleport me out of here.

Azrael turned his attention back to the daemon.

AZRAEL: You will be vanquished,

daemon, but not by my hand. I have a mission to complete but there is another coming who will cause you far more agony and suffering than I could ever hope to inflict upon you.

**FX - TELEPORTATION [AS UNLIKE STAR TREK
AS YOU CAN MAKE IT PLEASE...]**

DAEMON: No... No... Please, show mercy. I beg of you.

Ignoring the daemon's pleas for clemency, the Dark Angel faded away.

**SCENE FIFTEEN - INT. SECONDARY
SENSORIUM CHAMBER. *REVENGE.***

**ATMOS: RUMBLE OF ENGINES. SPARKING
OF RUINED VOX ARRAYS, AUSPEXES AND
COGITATORS. BEEPING OF INSTRUMENT
PANELS.**

**FX - CLANGING OF MULTIPLE SETS OF
ARMOURED FEET ON METAL DECK DRAWING EVER
CLOSER.**

Cheyne finished typing and tucked the data-slate inside her tunic. The work she had done in the sensorium, the knowledge she had gleaned about the sub-vox network, was too vital to be lost, so she had noted down her observations and theorems in the hope that when - if - her body was found her work might find its way back to Mars for further study.

She had known for a while that three people - if they were indeed people - had found a way into this section of

the ship and were on their way up here, likely to kill her. The last thing she had heard from the Space Marine before he cut off communication was that his mission was to cleanse the ship, not rescue her, so she knew that the three fast-moving dots on the body heat sensors were not friendly forces.

As their footfalls drew nearer and Cheyna heard the sound of armoured feet stamping along the deck she was gripped by the true horror of what was soon to burst through the door to the sensorium. Fearing the brutality of her demise, she removed the data-slate from her tunic and placed it atop one of the instrument consoles.

FX - BANGING OF ARMOURED FISTS ON STRONG METAL, WEAPONS DISCHARGE.

Her would-be killers reached the door and attempted to batter it down. The thick plasteel did its job, impervious even to the strength of Traitor Astartes and they were forced to try and shoot their way in instead.

FX - SAME TELEPORTATION NOISE AS FROM PREVIOUS SCENE.

A flash of blue light crept into the sensorium from the miniscule gap at the foot of the door and the faint tang of scorched ozone hit her nostrils. The weapons fire from the other side intensified briefly and then fell silent.

FX - FOOTSTEPS TOWARDS THE DOOR

**FX - SUSTAINED PLASMA DISCHARGE, CUTTING
RATHER THAN FIRING**

The edge of the door began to glow, smoke coming off it in wisps as intensely hot plasma burned through the plasteel.

Cheyne raised the laspistol she had taken from the body of one of the sensorium officers and pointed it at the door. She might be about to die but she was determined to go down fighting.

The plasma beam was making short work of the door and as the glow of molten metal almost completed its circuit Cheynea gripped the weapon tighter and scrunched her eyes shut.

**FX - CLANG OF DOOR FALLING OPEN,
FOOTSTEPS ADVANCING TOWARDS HER**

FX - SINGLE SHOT FROM LASPISTOL

She only had time to let off a single shot before the weapon was snatched from her grasp and tossed aside.

FX - GUN BEING THROWN AWAY

Her eyes still closed, she could feel the presence of another standing before her. To her surprise, the expected hand around her throat, blade to the gut or shot to the head never came.

CHEYNEA: (whispered) I am not afraid of you... I am not afraid of you...

AZRAEL: Really? Even in my wounded state I still think I cut quite the imposing figure.

Slowly, Cheyna opened her eyes to see a massive green-armoured figure looming over her. His left arm hung limply at his side, the pauldron over his shoulder torn and dented. A thick crack ran across the plate covering one of his thighs, dried blood riming the jagged edges like dark rust. His great winged helmet was clamped to his waist and he regarded her with stern, piercing eyes set into a taut, lined face.

CHEYNA: Lord Azrael...?

She noticed the scorch mark across the shoulder guard of his right arm, the forest green blemished by an ugly black scar.

CHEYNA: (disbelieving) Oh, sweet Omnissiah. I just shot a Space Marine.

AZRAEL: I think under the circumstances I can forgive you, adept.

CHEYNA: I... I don't understand. You said there would be no rescue, that your mission was to cleanse the *Revenge*.

Azrael gestured over his shoulder. Cheyna peered around him to see a trio of motionless corpses lying just beyond the doorway.

AZRAEL: I think three dead Black Legionnaires counts as cleansing.

The Dark Angel clasped his helmet and pulled it over his head, locking it in position.

AZRAEL: Time to go, adept. I have a battle to get back to and there's an unmanned bridge that needs to be back up and running. The *Revenge* is not yet back under our control and my battle-brothers and I will find its retaking easier if we have eyes and ears on the command deck.

FX - CRACKLE OF VOX LINK OPENING

AZRAEL: Gabriel. This is Azrael. Mission accomplished. All enemy combatants neutralised. Requesting extraction.

GABRIEL: <<As you wish, lord.>>

FX - TELEPORTATION

Placing a hand on the adept's shoulder, the two figures slowly faded from the sensorium. For Cheyna, the war was almost over. For Azrael, it was only just beginning.

**SCENE SIXTEEN - INT. THE CORRUPTED
LOWER DECKS OF *REVENGE***

ATMOS: AS SCENE SIX

**FX - ARMoured FOOTSTEPS ENTERING THE
CHAMBER**

DAEMON: He tricked us, Khârn. Azrael
tricked us both. He lured us here
in the hope that we would kill each
other.

Khârn didn't seem to notice or hear the
motionless daemon, instead looking up
and around at the vast chamber and the
shimmering, constantly changing walls.

DAEMON: It doesn't have to be this
way, Khârn. Set me free and I'll
grant you my aid. Together we'll
bring the Dark Angel to heel and his
head will be yours.

KHÂRN: Enough of your lies, daemon.
Where is he?

The World Eater did not look upon the daemon as he spoke, still taking in his new surroundings.

DAEMON: Gone. Back to rejoin his Chapter and gloat how he bested the most favoured of both the Blood God and Changer of Ways.

KHÂRN: He did not best me, daemon. He cheated me.

DAEMON: Yes, yes. Azrael is a cheat. A liar and a cheat.

KHÂRN: He cheated me out of his skull, a skull that I had promised to Khorne.

FX - GORECHILD REVS IN HIS HAND.

Khârñ finally let his gaze fall upon the helpless daemon.

KHÂRN: So I will have to offer him yours instead.

DAEMON: No... No... Please, I'll give you anything. All you have to do is name your price.

FX - GORECHILD TEARING INTO DAEMONFLESH.

FX - LONG, DRAWN OUT SCREAM.

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