

THE HORUS HERESY®

THE EAGLE'S TALON

John French



In the skies over Tallarn, the Imperial Fists
storm a renegade warship

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///SAMPLE FROM *EAGLE'S TALON* VOX FRAGMENT (VII).///
///PLEASE REVIEW AND CONFIRM RECORDING CLARITY BEFORE
ACCESSING FULL ARCHIVE.///

TH-144: <<*Chokepoint breached. They are coming through!*>>

GA-739: How long until they are past you?

AR-502: <<*Commander Gammus, this is Arcad. Their auto-defences are back online. Advance on target stalled.*>>

TH-144: <<*This is Theophon - chokepoint one has failed. Pulling back to chokepoint two. They are going to be into prime arterial corridor in six seconds.*>>

AR-502: <<*They are behind us...!*>>

GA-739: All units, this is Gammus. I am cutting prime arterial corridor. Charges firing in five, four, three, two... Detonate.

TH-144: <<*Detonation good. Prime arterial corridor closed. That should slow them down.*>>

GA-739: Theophon, how long until they bypass the wreckage?

TH-144: <<*Best guess - one hundred to one hundred and fifty seconds, commander.*>>

GA-739: Arcad, are you at the bridge atmosphere control?

AR-502: <<*We have heavy resistance, commander... we... Brother... We are...*>>

GA-739: Arcad?

TH-144: <<*This is Theophon, chokepoint two reached and holding.*>>

GA-739: Arcad, what is your strength and status?

AR-502: <<*Commander, we...*>> **///TRANSMISSION TERMINATED.///**

TH-144: <<*They are on us. By Dorn, there are too many of them! We cannot hold this position!*>>

GA-739: Arcad, what is your strength and objective status?

TH-144: <<*Commander, this is Theophon. Chokepoint will be overrun in thirty seconds.*>>

GA-739: Arcad?

TH-144: <<*He is gone, Gammus! What are your orders?*>>

GA-739: Arcad!

TH-144: <<*We are losing this, brother! There is no other choice. If we do this, then it must be now.*>>

///RECORDING CLARITY CONFIRMED. PROCEEDING.///

///ACCESSING FULL RECORDS DESIGNATED “EAGLE’S TALON”.///

///AUTHORISATION ACCEPTED.///

///RETRIEVING INITIAL FILE COMMAND NOTATION...///

///FILE ACCESSED.///

///PRAISE BE TO THE MACHINE. PRAISE BE TO THE SEEKER OF SECRETS.///

One hundred and ninety-seven days, ten hours, seventeen minutes and thirty-one seconds from the first strike of the Battle of Tallarn, the macro-transporter *Eagle’s Talon* impacted onto the surface of the planet. The effect on immediate ground operations on the southern continent was profound, and has been recorded extensively elsewhere. However, the incident’s role in the course of the wider engagement is difficult to judge, the Battle of Tallarn still a recent event in the ongoing civil war.

At the time, the fall of the *Eagle’s Talon* was thought to be the result of action by an element – or elements – from the loyalist Imperial Army warships within the Tallarn System, or a catastrophic failure of the ship’s own protocols.

Both of these presumptions are false.

The vox file attached to this record constitutes signals captured from a Seventh Legion strike force onboard the *Eagle’s Talon* prior to its atmospheric re-entry. Signal capture was accidental, and the result of passive operations in place throughout Perturabo’s forces. This record, like the means by which it was obtained, remains unknown to all outside of our Legion.

The strength of the Imperial Fists strike force is estimated to have been three squads, designated as Gammus, Theophon, and Arcad. All three squads were of recon configuration, with light armaments only. Infiltration onto the vessel is believed to have been by gunship and micro hull-breach. Mission command was embedded within the strike force as part of Squad Gammus.

///ACCESSING *EAGLE'S TALON* INCIDENT, VOX FRAGMENT (I).///
///RECORD PROCEEDS. PRAISE THE MACHINE.///

TH-144: <<*Squad Theophon at waypoint one. Zero resistance, no signs of detection.*>>

GA-739: Confirmed, Theophon.

TH-144: <<*Proceeding to arterial corridor beta.*>>

GA-739: Theophon, hold position.

TH-144: <<*We are exposed here, commander. The plans were not accurate. There are four spurs off this junction, and the marked gantries have been removed. There are cutting torch marks on the walls and floor. We have no cover, and this ship is waking up to drop a lot of armour onto the surface. If anything comes through, we will be compromised.*>>

GA-739: Understood, Theophon. The order stands. Hold your position.

AR-502: <<*This is Arcad. Conveyor shaft breached. Grav-chutes active. We are ready to ascend.*>>

GA-739: Ascend, Arcad. Hold at the second waypoint.

AR-502: <<*For Dorn, and the Emperor. Squad Arcad at waypoint two. High levels of crew and servitor activity. Zero resistance, no signs of detection.*>>

GA-739: Confirmed, Arcad. Theophon, you may proceed.

TH-144: <<*By your word, commander.*>>

AR-502: <<*This ship is vast.*>>

GA-739: You should have familiarised yourself with the layout, Arcad. I hope you will not be surprised by other details.

AR-502: <<*"Awe is the gift of the eye and the ear, not the mind or the cold numeral."*>>

GA-739: Heh, I suppose I can hardly dispute the words of the primarch. This ship is in the top displacement class for a vessel of

its type, but it is not unique.

AR-502: <<*It is impressive though. Even to the likes of you, commander.*>>

GA-739: The likes of me, Arcad?

TH-144: <<*I think Sergeant Arcad is meaning to respectfully use this tactical communication channel to imply that you are... long in the tooth, commander.*>>

GA-739: I do not take compliments from my subordinates, Arcad. Even if our units have a reputation to maintain.

TH-144: <<*Squad Theophon entering arterial corridor beta now. It is in use, commander. Floor vibrations. There is a tracked unit moving nearby, but out of visual.*>>

GA-739: Closing or moving away?

TH-144: <<*Moving away. Vibration is reducing.*>>

GA-739: Can you reach the hatch to the power conduit?

TH-144: <<*Yes. If we move now.*>>

GA-739: Proceed, Theophon.

TH-144: <<*Do we need to do this? We can discard this objective and advance on the primary->>*

GA-739: Proceed to the power conduit and set the charges, Theophon.

TH-144: <<*Aye, commander. Squad Theophon proceeding to secondary objective gamma.*>>

GA-739: Confirmed, Theophon. Arcad, hold your position. One step at a time, brothers.

AR-502: <<*By your word, commander.*>>

///RECORD ACCESS PROCEEDING.///

The Imperial Fists' infiltration onto the *Eagle's Talon* occurred simultaneously with a major but unnamed engagement in the centre of Tallarn's southern continent. This engagement was dominated by Titan and Knight-class war machines and, at the time, it was the largest since loyalist reinforcements had arrived in-system. Given the weight and power of the forces involved, it was possible that if either side achieved a decisive victory then they might be able to drive an overall tactical advantage, and then claim victory on Tallarn as a whole.

The *Eagle's Talon* was the largest of a number of transports positioning to drop

forces onto the southern continent. Had it succeeded, it could well have tipped the battle in favour of the traitor forces.

///ACCESSING *EAGLE'S TALON* INCIDENT, VOX FRAGMENT (II).///
///RECORD PROCEEDS. THE MACHINE DREAMS. THE MACHINE KNOWS ALL.///

TH-144: **///VOX ENCRYPTION ACTIVATED.///** <<*Squad Theophon at port-side power conduit, designated secondary objective gamma. Zero resistance, no signs of detection.*>>

GA-739: You are using a direct link, Theophon. Is there a problem with your vox equipment?

TH-144: <<*The vox is clear, brother.*>>

GA-739: Then proceed to complete the objective, and return to the approved mission frequencies.

TH-144: <<*I wanted to speak without Arcad hearing...*>>

GA-739: The time for that has passed, Theophon. You have made your misgivings known. I have heard and understood your concerns, and deemed them of less weight than the needs of this operation. Proceed with the secondary objective. That is my will.

TH-144: <<*If the primary mission fails... will you do it? You will detonate the charges?*>>

GA-739: If this ship completes a full tactical deployment onto the surface, the battle below will be lost.

TH-144: <<*And if that battle is lost?*>>

GA-739: Theophon, this is not the time.

TH-144: <<*If it is lost, then what will happen? Will the war for Tallarn end? Will the Imperium be lost? Or will everything simply continue as it was before?*>>

GA-739: Victory is made by every detail, every battle great and small. Never forget that, brother. No fight is insignificant, and we cannot know what deeds the fate of all might rest upon. All we can do is fight, when we can, with everything we have.

TH-144: <<*And if we detonate a charge on this power conduit it will cut the ship's engines and push it into the planet's grasp. It will hit the surface. The immediate blast will flatten everything across half the southern continent. What of our allies down there?*>>

What of the battles they fight? Fire from the sky does not care who it burns.>>

GA-739: Most forces loyal to the Emperor are already in shelters beneath the surface.

TH-144: *<<One crack, just one, and the poisoned air of Tallarn will get in, and then... And then there will be a shelter for nothing but corpses.>>*

GA-739: There are always prices to be paid in war, brother.

TH-144: *<<I know, Gammus. I remember. Phall is far away, but I have not forgotten what survival costs. But it is for us to bear that cost, not mortals. This is our war, a legionary war. Our kind began it, and we should pay the price for our own victories.>>*

GA-739: It is not what I intend, brother. If the primary objective is met, then none of this will be necessary.

TH-144: *<<And if that fails?>>*

GA-739: Then this ship falls.

TH-144: *<<And those below?>>*

GA-739: No one lives on Tallarn, brother. Only the dead who have yet to go to their graves. Place the charges as planned, Theophon, detonation vox-keyed to my control.

TH-144: *<<By your word, commander.>>*

///RECORD ACCESS PROCEEDING.///

The taking of a large spacecraft is not simple task. The number of troops involved to successfully control or purge a population of thousands – even tens of thousands – of human crew are similar to those needed to conquer a conurbated city. Combined with the issues of fighting in a confined and profoundly hostile environment, boarding missions are well named in the Imperial military doctrine as zone mortalis. The ground of death.

The most common method of taking a ship is the targeting of either the primary or secondary bridge. Without effective command elements, even a warship is just a lump of metal drifting in the void. Because of this vulnerability, most command points are the most heavily defended locations on a ship. To take or destroy a bridge by boarding action is normally a matter of slow attrition by specially equipped troops, or a lightning fast strike by an elite force with overwhelming strength.

To try and take a ship by infiltration is... unusual. The actions of the Imperial Fists on the *Eagle's Talon* indicate a lack of suitable forces, but also a degree of imagination that we have not previously credited to the sons of Dorn.

As in all things, assumption is the seed of ruin.

///ACCESSING *EAGLE'S TALON* INCIDENT, VOX FRAGMENT (III).///
///RECORD PROCEEDS. THE MACHINE IS ALL. ALL IS THE MACHINE.///

AR-502: <<*Commander Gammus, this is Arcad.>>*

GA-739: What is your situation, brother?

AR-502: <<*We have a problem. We are moving through the rear spinal levels, but the plans were not accurate, commander. The layout is totally different. We have had to divert, and the only option was to use the vents in the upper crew decks. We are right on top of the enemy.>>*

GA-739: What is the enemy strength?

AR-502: <<*Uncertain, but substantial, and they are at battle readiness. They may be human, but a lot of them are naval armsmen, plus there are hundreds of mustering tank crew. We came close to compromise three times. We are holding position in a cavity above the companionway marked as six-seven-gamma-two on the original plans. As far as I can tell.>>*

GA-739: There is... a sub-arterial passage leading to the primary target, not... ten metres from your current location. Can you shuttle your squad across the passage to it?

AR-502: <<*Enemy activity is constant. They move without pattern, and the longest gap has been six seconds.>>*

GA-739: Can you work your way back and take a different route?

AR-502: <<*We can't go back. A crew muster moved into the last location we came through, and... And there is another problem.>>*

GA-739: Tell me.

AR-502: <<*There is a Mechanicum presence in this area, at least cohort strength. Thallaxii and Myrmidon troops, and Legio Cybernetica maniples. They are on full alert, sensors primed.>>*

GA-739: Your suggestion, sergeant? Speak plainly.

AR-502: <<*First we need a diversion, commander. Something to*

get their attention, but not jeopardise the mission. Something that could just be a severe accident.>>

TH-144: *<<We could blow the hoist on the main port conveyor. Drop it down fifty decks. Potentially a lot of damage, but they should not realise it was deliberate for at least fifty to seventy minutes.>>*

GA-739: My squad can reach the conveyor shaft from our current location. Go on, Arcad. What is the next step?

AR-502: *<<Even with the diversion, we are going to need to eliminate two of the crew before we can proceed.>>*

GA-739: That is a substantial risk. Why?

AR-502: *<<Because there are armsmen posted within five metres of the vent we would have to drop through.>>*

GA-739: You have planned both kills?

AR-502: *<<Yes. Sniper shot for the first, through the grate. We drop through at the same time. Take the second, pick up both corpses, take them with us.>>*

TH-144: *<<The guards' absence will be noted, even if the kills are clean.>>*

AR-502: *<<Correct. I estimate that we will have no more than seven minutes until their absence is discovered.>>*

GA-739: You will have to reach the primary objective inside that time, and destroy it. You can do that?

AR-502: *<<Yes.>>*

GA-739: Very well, Arcad. We will proceed as you suggest.

AR-502: *<<Thank you, commander. You honour me.>>*

///RECORD ACCESS PROCEEDING.///

The preoccupation with honour amongst many of the Legions is a factor which can only be seen as a weakness in the current climate. In the time of the Great Crusade, it had merit in bonding warriors together to a single purpose, and maintaining the ideals for which the Crusade was supposedly being waged. Now it can be seen only as a flaw in those that still carry it and, more importantly, an advantage ripe for greater exploitation.

What function does honour serve, other than to create hesitation when there should be swift action, and to create doubt when there should be none?

The following is a pointed illustration of this flaw.

///ACCESSING *EAGLE'S TALON* INCIDENT, VOX FRAGMENT (IV).///
///RECORD PROCEEDS. THE MACHINE SEES ALL. EVERY DEED IS
ILLUMINATED IN THE EYE OF THE MACHINE.///

TH-144: **///VOX ENCRYPTION ACTIVATED///** <<*You are worried, brother. I could hear it in your silence after Arcad spoke of honour.*>>

GA-739: We are in the middle of a mission, and you think this is the best use of a personal vox-channel?

TH-144: <<*I am your brother in blood and bond, Gammus. Need I list the battlefields that we shared, to earn the right to question if my commander harbours unspoken doubts? I do not think I need request that right. It is mine already.*>>

GA-739: Yes. Perhaps it is.

TH-144: <<*You need not doubt Arcad, brother. He is young, that is all.*>>

GA-739: He is not. No one remains young in this war.

TH-144: <<*He never knew the Great Crusade. He is one of the first of us who have only ever known war with ourselves. In time all Space Marines will be like Arcad. That he still thinks of honour in such times should give you hope.*>>

GA-739: There is no honour in what we are doing. Only necessity.

TH-144: <<*I know some amongst the Legion who would say that our kind have no place claiming honour. Shadow-dwellers and assassins, some call us.*>>

GA-739: We fight our battles in silence, not dishonour. If the primarch believed otherwise then the recon squads would never have been adopted.

TH-144: <<*You seem to make an argument against your own worries, brother.*>>

GA-739: We are old, my friend, and we were old when we went into the shadows to make war...

TH-144: <<*But Arcad is no aspirant, brother. He was blooded at Phall. I have seen few better as a squad leader, even among those with decades more experience.*>>

GA-739: But from that battle he came to us - to a war against our enemies, fought without ever looking them in the eye. This should not be the cradle in which the young learn to fight. It should be where the old come to die. [beat] Where *we* come to die.

TH-144: <<*A more melancholy way of seeing ourselves, I cannot imagine.*>>

GA-739: The chances of success are slim, brother. The chances of survival even lower. If we die here, who will carry our names back to the Temple of Oaths? Will there even be a Legion to remember us? And if there is, what type of warriors will they be?

TH-144: <<*I cannot help wondering brother, if it is not Arcad's honour that worries you, but your own.*>>

///RECORD ACCESS PROCEEDING.///

We can deduce that the Seventh Legion operation on board the *Eagle's Talon* had as its focus one of the crucial command and control systems of the ship, most likely the communications trunk that linked the bridge to the stations which enacted its orders. If the communications on a ship of such size can be cut, then it leaves the whole vessel frozen in action – the bridge unable to give commands, and the crew and systems without commands to enact. In a living creature we might liken it to severing the nerves connecting brain and body, leaving both alive but paralysed, the mind locked within its skull.

Such a plan requires a high degree of precision and nerve, but these qualities have never been in doubt when it comes to the Imperial Fists. There is, though, the self-evident truth that the more precise and delicate an operation, the more it is prone to error.

And once disrupted, the chances of mission collapse expand at an ever-accelerating rate. As we know well, the boundary between disaster and triumph is a razor-cut line.

///ACCESSING *EAGLE'S TALON* INCIDENT, VOX FRAGMENT (V).///
///RECORD PROCEEDS. THE MACHINE IS ETERNAL. THE ETERNAL IS AN EXPRESSION OF THE MACHINE.///

GA-739: Squad Gammus in position. All units confirm readiness

and location.

TH-144: <<*Theophon in place. Holding at chokepoint on prime arterial corridor.*>>

AR-502: <<*Squad Arcad. We are ready.*>>

GA-739: On your word, Arcad.

AR-502: <<*Confirmed, commander. Detonate conveyor shaft charges on my mark. Standby. Detonate.*>>

TH-144: <<*Alert sounding on port decks.*>>

AR-502: <<*Corridor beneath our position cleared. Squad standby to engage. Execute. Targets down, moving to->*>>

GA-739: Arcad?

AR-502: <<*Thallaxii and automata engaging us. Returning fire.*>>

TH-144: <<*Full alert active. Blast doors sealing on our level!*>>

AR-502: <<*We are pinned down on a gantry complex at... junction five-one-zero-seven.*>>

TH-144: <<*Commander, permission to close chokepoint?*>>

GA-739: Permission denied.

TH-144: <<*The ship's auto-weapons are activating. Commander->>*

GA-739: Arcad, advance on the primary objective.

AR-502: <<*Receiving fire from two arcs. Correction, three arcs. Effective squad strength at four.*>>

GA-739: Move for the objective. You must reach it.

AR-502: <<*We will not reach it. The auto-turrets will rip us in half.*>>

GA-739: No, you *will* reach it. I will give you an opening.

AR-502: <<*How is that possible? Half the ship is trying to kill us.*>>

GA-739: Because my squad is about to hit the servitor controls for your sector.

///RECORD ACCESS PROCEEDING.///

The advantages of a force operating covertly against a more powerful enemy are few, but chief amongst them are the twin elements of surprise and confusion. If one individual can visit destruction across a large area in a short space of time,

then that individual is not merely one in the minds of their foes – they are *many*. With planning and aggression they can seem to be everywhere.

Though the attached records are only auditory, it can be simply deduced that the three squads of the strike force were spread at different locations through the decks of the *Eagle's Talon*. Squad Arcad, having taken casualties and under fire, had been attempting to reach the mission's primary objective. Squad Gammus, the command squad for the mission, is located in the machine spaces of higher decks. Squad Theophon is standing ready to cut the primary route by which enemy reinforcements can move into Arcad's location.

///ACCESSING *EAGLE'S TALON* INCIDENT, VOX FRAGMENT (VI).///
///RECORD PROCEEDS. KNOWLEDGE AND THE MACHINE ARE ONE. THE MACHINE IS THE CHILD OF KNOWLEDGE.///

AR-502: <<*Fire intensifying, commander!*>>

GA-739: Detonating!

TH-144: <<*Auto-defence weapons are reported as down.*>>

GA-739: Arcad, move now!

AR-502: <<*Squad Arcad mov- Argh!*>>

GA-739: Arcad! Arcad, what is your status?

AR-502: <<*Squad strength now two.*>>

GA-739: You are wounded.

AR-502: <<*I don't need my left arm to run. Enemy forces are at our heels.*>>

GA-739: Estimate time to target.

AR-502: <<*Two minutes. But we will not make it if they keep coming.*>>

GA-739: Theophon, close the chokepoint.

TH-144: <<*By your word. Squad Theophon engaging now. Full fire. Cut them down!*>>

AR-502: <<*Target in sight. Forces are pursuing us. Turning to engage.*>>

GA-739: Keep moving!

TH-144: <<*This is Theophon - we have enemy forces closing through our fire.*>>

GA-739: Strength, and direction?

TH-144: <<*All of them, and every direction!*>>

///RECORD ACCESS PROCEEDING.///

At this point, the probability of the mission succeeding without the loss of all forces was zero-point-zero. This fact would have been known to the Imperial Fists, but it would not have inhibited their ability to function. They, like all of us raised by the gene-seed of our sires, are not bound by the weaknesses of lesser beings.

They would have known that they would not survive. The only question would have been whether or not they *could* still succeed.

///TIME ELAPSED FROM PREVIOUS RECORD: 00.00.24.///

///ACCESSING *EAGLE'S TALON* INCIDENT, VOX FRAGMENT (VII).///

///RECORD PROCEEDS. THE MACHINE IS ALPHA. THE MACHINE IS OMEGA.///

TH-144: <<*Chokepoint breached. They are coming through!*>>

GA-739: How long until they are past you?

AR-502: <<*Commander Gammus, this is Arcad. Their auto-defences are back online. Advance on target stalled.*>>

TH-144: <<*This is Theophon - chokepoint one has failed. Pulling back to chokepoint two. They are going to be into prime arterial corridor in six seconds.*>>

AR-502: <<*They are behind us!*>>

GA-739: All units, this is Gammus. I am cutting prime arterial corridor. Charges firing in five, four, three, two... Detonate.

TH-144: <<*Detonation good. Prime arterial corridor closed. That should slow them down.*>>

GA-739: Theophon, how long until they bypass the wreckage?

TH-144: <<*Best guess - one hundred to one hundred and fifty seconds, commander.*>>

GA-739: Arcad, are you at the bridge atmosphere control?

AR-502: <<*We have heavy resistance, commander... we... Brother... We are...*>>

GA-739: Arcad?

TH-144: <<*This is Theophon, chokepoint two reached and holding.*>>

GA-739: Arcad, what is your strength and status?

AR-502: <<Commander, we...>> **///TRANSMISSION TERMINATED.///**

TH-144: <<They are on us. By Dorn, there are too many of them! We cannot hold this position!>>

GA-739: Arcad, what is your strength and objective status?

TH-144: <<Commander, this is Theophon. Chokepoint will be overrun in thirty seconds.>>

GA-739: Arcad?

TH-144: <<He is gone, Gammus! What are your orders?>>

GA-739: Arcad!

TH-144: <<We are losing this, brother! There is no other choice. If we do this, then it must be now.>>

GA-739: Arcad, can you hear me? Arcad, you have to reach the target.

TH-144: <<Chokepoint two breached. Falling back into ventilation system. It is now, Gammus. The primary target is lost.>>

GA-739: If Arcad can reach the target-

TH-144: <<Arcad is gone! If you don't blow the power conduit now, then we will have failed.>>

GA-739: I will not do it, Theophon. You were right. We do not slaughter our own allies for victory. I am a son of Rogal Dorn. I will not be the bringer of such annihilation.

TH-144: <<Then we die here, in failure.>>

GA-739: We all die as we were meant to.

TH-144: <<No. We were made for a different age, brother. It was not me that was right. It was you. If we fail even for an instant, even in the smallest of things, then there will be no future.>>

GA-739: Better to be no more, than to betray what we once were.

TH-144: <<The choice is not yours, Gammus. The charges are not keyed to your command. I thought I would stay your hand if we reached this point. But now the hand that will fell this ship will be mine.>>

GA-739: Brother, no!

TH-144: <<And this is not victory, or betrayal. It is sacrifice.>>

TH-144: **///TRANSMISSION TERMINATED.///**

GA-739: ///TRANSMISSION TERMINATED.///

///FILE ERROR.///

///VOX CAPTURE RECORD ENDS.///

The *Eagle's Talon* fell from Tallarn's sky. The blast wave from the initial impact travelled over three hundred kilometres. Winds of over a thousand kilometres an hour spun debris from the ground, and scattered into the burning air. The engagement on the southern continent was ended in an instant. Earthquakes split the ground, and tidal waves surged across the sludge-clogged seas. Nucleonic fallout from the reactor failure rose up and spread across the atmosphere.

On any other planet this one event would have doomed all life to a slow death, smothered beneath a blanket of ashes. But this was Tallarn, and the dead planet could not die twice.

The consequences of this one incident are difficult to judge. Would events have unfolded differently if these few scraps of valour and foolishness had taken a different shape?

Perhaps.

For our purposes, it is enough to know that it happened. Will this split in character repeat within the Imperial Fists? Can advantage be taken from it? The questions remain open, but one thing can be certain – for this intelligence to be useful to our Legion it must remain *unknown*.

I tender my advice to you, my lord father, that once you have reviewed this record you consign it to oblivion.

///INITIATING RECORD PURGE.///

///ENTER THE WORD OF OBLITERATION TO PROCEED.///

///PURGE PROCESS COMPLETE.///

///SEEKING ALL ARCHIVE RECORDS DESIGNATED "EAGLE'S TALON"...///

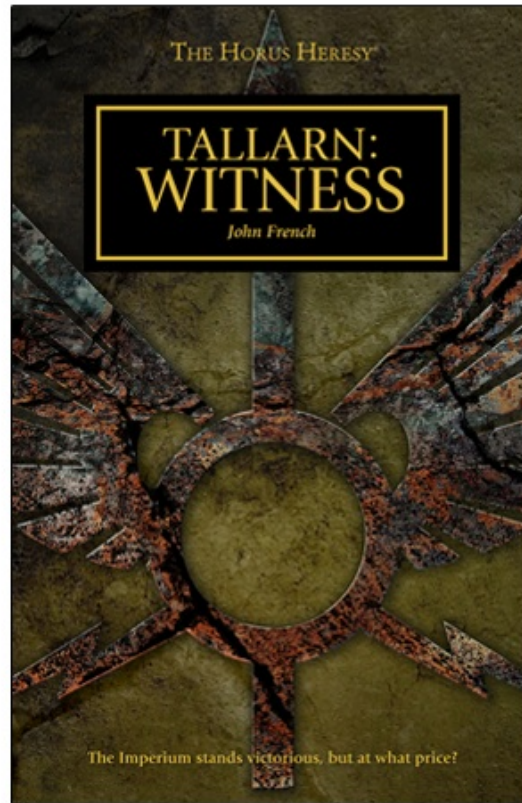
///NO RECORDS FOUND.///

///THE MACHINE KNOWS ALL. ALL IS KNOWN IN THE MACHINE.///

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John French has written several Horus Heresy stories including the novellas *Tallarn: Executioner* and *The Crimson Fist*, the novel *Tallarn: Ironclad*, and the audio dramas *Templar* and *Warmaster*. He is the author of the Ahriman series, which includes the novels *Ahriman: Exile*, *Ahriman: Sorcerer* and *Ahriman: Unchanged*, plus a number of related short stories collected in *Ahriman: Exodus*, including ‘The Dead Oracle’ and ‘Hand of Dust’. Additionally for the Warhammer 40,000 universe he has written the Space Marine Battles novella *Fateweaver*, plus many short stories. He lives and works in Nottingham, UK.

Imperial forces stand victorious over the blasted wastes of Tallarn. But has the price of victory been too high?



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