



THE HORUS HERESY<sup>®</sup>

# MASTER OF THE FIRST

*Gav Thorpe*

On Caliban, rebellion begins to grow amongst  
the Dark Angels exiled by their primarch



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# MASTER OF THE FIRST

**Gav Thorpe**

The commands of the recruiting sergeants drifted through the open window, harsh alongside the bucolic hiss of the wind and the buzz of insects that drifted through the hot summer air. The clump of boots was almost perfectly in time. Almost, but not quite, and this became a cause for more shouting from the sergeants.

If he closed his eyes, Astelan could almost believe that he was back on the plains where he had been born. He *had* to close his eyes to ignore the towering fortifications of Aldurukh that surrounded him, and the comm-panels and data displays of the guard post command chamber. If he did that, concentrating on the flitting insects and the heat coming in through the narrow glass window, he could picture the broad waters of the Dynepri meandering between pale-leaved trees, and the silvery shimmer of the camp hab-covers reflected along her banks...

A chime came from the door panel, and the memories disappeared like the morning mist had on that fateful day, so many years ago.

Astelan opened the door locks. Though the Legion had brought many of the technological miracles of the Imperium to Caliban, much of Aldurukh remained unchanged, still using basic pre-Imperial systems and mechanics. The lack of voice-activation in particular still irked the Terran-born warrior.

The door slid open with a rumble of well-oiled gears, revealing Captain Melian, one of Astelan's company commanders. The captain bowed his head in greeting.

‘Chapter Master, you wanted to see me?’

‘Former Chapter Master, captain. My rank is still held in abeyance. My summons was in reply to your request that we might have a conversation in private.’ Astelan waved a hand at the unthinking dials and screens and automated systems of the guard chamber. ‘There is nobody here to observe us.’

Melian glanced at the open doorway. Astelan activated the control and the door groaned back into place. He gestured to Melian to speak.

‘I... I am not sure how to express myself on the matter I wish to discuss. I have reservations.’

‘Doubts?’

‘Yes, doubts, Chapter Master. Regarding the Calibanites.’

‘There are no Terrans and Calibanites any more, Melian. We are all Dark Angels.’

Melian did not have a chance to reply before an alert beeped onto one of the comm-panels, and Astelan turned to acknowledge the incoming message. He read it in silence.

‘Hmm. Interesting.’

‘What’s that, Chapter Master?’

‘A departure. The Lord Cypher and Brother-Librarian Zahariel, unscheduled shuttle run. Launch permission is sealed by Luther himself.’

‘This is exactly what I mean,’ Melian sighed. ‘And why does Luther maintain this superfluous position of “Lord Cypher”? It’s antiquated.’

Astelan scanned the details. The shuttle’s flight plan was registered to take them west, but their trajectory was plotted for the northern transits. He said nothing to Melian, but it was a disturbing thought that Zahariel and Cypher were undertaking a secretive mission so near to the abandoned Northwolds arcology.

The sound of the shuttle’s engine drifted away but it stirred Astelan’s memory again. Melian shifted awkwardly.

‘I am intruding, my lord. Forgive me.’

‘I was just thinking, actually, of the day the Emperor’s gunships fell upon my people. I remember the chatter of chain guns and the screams of the dying. The anti-air cannons on the backs of our megaphaunts thundered in reply, driving off the aerial attack, but soon the ground troops stormed in. Thunder Warriors, Melian – did you ever see their like?’

‘I did not.’

‘Crude compared to the warriors of the Legiones Astartes that would later recruit young Merir Astelan, but far stronger than any techno-barbarians that the poor Sibran nomad clans could muster. It was a massacre.’

‘Did you not mourn your blood-kin?’

Astelan smiled. ‘Only until I was recruited into the Emperor’s Legion.’

‘The First Legion.’

‘The *only* Legion. I was one of the first five thousand. You will never know how it felt to claim that honour.’

Melian nodded respectfully. There were many Terrans within the ranks of the Dark Angels, but most had been recruited after other Legions had been founded. They were not the sharp arrowhead, but rather the shaft that followed it.

Astelan returned his attention to his subordinate.

‘So, you were saying something about Calibanites?’

Melian’s list of deficiencies and accusations was specific, and betrayed at least a year of cataloguing such misdemeanours.

‘And you know, my lord, that not all the Calibanites are even Dark Angels. Well, not Space Marines.’

‘You speak of Lord Luther and the others who were too old to become true legionaries?’

‘I do. They should never have been part of the Legion.’

‘Anything else?’ Astelan asked, barely suppressing a sigh.

‘No. I thank you for your time, Chapter Master – I am sorry to have wasted it. I knew you would not be interested. I did not wish to disturb you, and voiced my concerns to Brother-Captain Galedan instead. I have to admit, he told me to stop worrying about Luther and to concentrate on keeping my own company sharp for battle. Then, later, he suggested that I speak to you after all.’

Astelan regarded Melian carefully, disguising his interest with feigned boredom. There had to be a reason why Galedan had sent him to their Chapter Master. Perhaps he hoped Astelan would chastise the captain and dissuade him from further meddling.

Or was there more to it than that?

‘Galedan was right that you come to me,’ he assured Melian. ‘You have spoken of incidents, infractions. But, more generally, what concerns you?’

‘The recruits, my lord. They are being trained in the warfare of the Legiones Astartes, but they are being taught the old culture of Caliban. They are being raised more like knights of the Order.’

‘The Order? The group that once took the young Lion as its Grand Master? It is defunct. Only a few titles and ceremonies remain, to honour the primarch’s past.’

Melian’s agitation grew and he strode to the window and gazed out, brow furrowing as he watched the Calibanite recruits below.

‘It’s more than that. There is no mention of the Emperor in the new oaths of dedication. The recruits swear to defend Caliban against all foes instead.’

‘The Lion returned Luther to Caliban as its guardian. We no longer even have any warships – we are a defence force in all but name. The Lion will receive proper testimonies of allegiance, when he returns.’

‘You approve of these changes?’

‘I am ambivalent, Melian. Let us be honest, we’ve become irrelevant. The Lion sent us here to rot while Luther creates the Legion of tomorrow. A Legion from Caliban.’

Melian turned and shook his head, not in denial but annoyance.

‘But you know the galaxy has changed. The last supply ships brought word of–’

‘None of this matters! Those supply ships left years ago. We have been forgotten.’ Astelan sighed. ‘What do you want from me? Should I insist that Luther reinstate the old oaths? Should I conjure the Lion from the aether so that he can put things right?’

Looking away again, Melian hesitated. Astelan was about to berate him for wasting his time but some instinct told him to wait. There was more to this than a captain frustrated at being trapped on this Throne-forsaken world.

‘You spoke to Galedan. Have you shared these thoughts with any others? Others that might feel the same as we do?’

‘We? You agree with me then, my lord?’

‘With your concerns? Of course. You know I have no particular love for the Calibanites and that my loyalty has ever been to the Emperor, first and foremost. The fact that we languish on this planet is proof of that. I often wonder if there was more to Luther’s return than we know. But that is of no concern for now. Are there others that share our view?’

‘Quite a few, I am glad to say. Mostly from the old Legion – from Terra, like us. But a few of the veteran Calibanites too. We’ve not yet decided on a course of action.’

‘Action?’ Astelan replied, glancing around. ‘Careful, Melian – this is a dangerous path to walk. Luther is Grand Master now, second only to the Lion. He has unquestioned authority, legally if not morally.’

‘Luther isn’t the problem,’ said Melian, voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper, though there was no one to overhear them. ‘We already know how we can isolate him, and remove him from power. It’s the others, the recruits and those loyal to Luther, that cause the problem. They are too many, and we are too few to force the issue.’

Astelan thought for a moment. ‘Then we need a mandate to act. The only way we can get that is from off-world. A message from Terra, or perhaps even the primarch himself, would go a long way towards justifying what needs to be done. If Luther has no authority to remain, his followers will back whatever action you take to remove him.’

‘You really think we might be able to do something?’

‘I confess I did not know there was wider support for our opinions. It would help your cause a lot if a former Chapter Master, one appointed by the Emperor and held in high regard in the old Legion, was to be the figurehead.’

Melian nodded. ‘Your experience, your reputation, would be a tremendous boost to our efforts, Chapter Master.’

‘It is settled then. I need you to assemble a gathering. Not everyone, just the officers who can speak confidently for the forces under their command. I’ll leave the details to you. You know these loyal warriors best, and I am sure you’ll continue with the same circumspect approach. Best not to invoke my name at this stage, until we know who we can trust.’

‘As you wish. I am truly grateful for your understanding and participation, my lord. I know we face a difficult time, but with your leadership we shall return the Legion to the right path.’

‘I am sure of it, captain.’

When Melian had left, Astelan used the comm-panel to establish an unlogged, secure vox-link.

‘Galedan, report to the guard post immediately.’

As the hatchway of the magazine creaked open, the soft conversation within fell to silence. The room was emptied of stores save for just a few boxes scattered on the metal shelving units. Astelan stepped over the threshold, to be greeted by more than a dozen pairs of inquiring eyes in the yellow gleam of the artificial lights. He recognised most of the faces – half of them he had fought alongside for almost two centuries. A few, Calibanites to a man, were unknown to him, but he had to trust in Melian’s judgement. They were all of company command rank and higher. Two of them, Neriedes and Temur, were Chapter Masters – like his, their commands had been suspended for undisclosed reasons.

Melian moved to the front of the crowd and held up his hands.

‘Brothers, Master Astelan is the reason you have been brought here. He is sympathetic to our cause, and desired to be heard.’

There were no objections. Astelan took this as his cue to speak.

‘We are all here because we share a certain viewpoint – an opinion regarding the nature of the Dark Angels Legion and what it means to be a true servant of the Emperor. These past years have been hard, but we have borne our reduced status with stoic dignity, as would be expected of any warrior of the First Legion.’

There were murmurs of agreement. He went on.

‘But a time is approaching when such stoicism will not be enough. A tipping point will come. Those who believe in what the Emperor has created must face a choice, or else be swept up by events beyond our control.’

Temur, a long-serving Terran legionary with a bionic left arm and a heavily scarred face, stepped forwards, his voice electronically rendered through a vox-grille. There was a hint of confrontation in his expression, a testing of Astelan’s assured demeanour.

‘And you are the one to lead us past this tipping point, Merir?’

‘I will force nothing upon you, that is not my purpose. I come only with a suggested course of action. If you adopt it, I expect you to follow my lead until it is done.’

‘Very well, what do you propose?’

Astelan put a finger to the vox-bead in his ear. ‘Please, come in.’

Brighter light broke into the dimness as the hatchway opened again, silhouetting a short, slender woman in the uniform of the Imperial Army auxilia that had been stationed on Caliban since the arrival of the Imperium.

She pulled off her cap to reveal greying auburn hair cropped close to the scalp, and nodded in deference to the Space Marines that greeted her with suspicious looks. Her dress jacket bore the badges of high rank, and the ribbons of several meritorious awards and combat medals.

‘My lords.’

Astelan closed the hatch behind the woman and took up a relaxed stance next to her, dwarfing the officer with his bulk.

‘Marchesa-Colonel Bethalin Tylain, my brothers. If you do not know her, she is vice-commander of the garrison forces. Redundant on a world now populated by more than thirty thousand battle-ready legionaries, you will agree – but she shares our concerns about Luther’s loyalties.’

Temur looked unimpressed. ‘The garrison is not enough to swing the balance of military power in our favour. What use is she to us?’

Astelan did not speak, but looked at Lady Tylain, nodding for her to answer the question.

‘The Caliban defence force regiments were created to provide internal and planetary security,’ she explained, ‘allowing the warriors of the Legion to prosecute their own wars safe in the knowledge that the home world was secure. These duties have, as Master Astelan put it, become redundant with the presence of so many legionaries on Caliban. Since the unrest at the Northwolds, we and the Jaegers have been rendered mostly ceremonial, restricted to the guarding of non-Legion facilities.’

There was discontented muttering, and Astelan held up a hand.

‘Silence, brothers. Lady Tylain is a senior officer of the Imperial Army and is deserving of your attention and respect. This behaviour is symptomatic of the division and poor discipline brought about by our extended posting here. You would do well to lead better by example.’

Some of the officers looked suitably chagrined, Temur amongst them. A few glared in irritation at Astelan, but no further objections were raised and Lady Tylain continued.

‘While the Dark Angels maintain their own chantry within the walls of Aldurukh, there is another astropath tower located not far from the Rock for the use of Imperial personnel, mercantile interests and the like. Since the unforeseen removal of the Northwolds administrators, the tower at Redevakh has gone largely unused, and is most likely forgotten. The guarding of this facility falls to a corps of the defence forces under my command.’

Astelan could see the glimmering of understanding in the eyes of the others, and took up the final part of the explanation.

‘Captain Melian informs me that there are already plans afoot to isolate and confine Luther. While that is in progress, another task force consisting of our loyal companies will secure the tower at Redevakh, and will send messages both to Terra and to our primarch. We seek confirmation that original Legion protocols are to be restored and, in the absence of the Lion, the former command structure is to be reinstated until his return.’

Melian raised a hand and Astelan nodded, granting him permission to speak. ‘Warp communication has been sparse, almost impossible for several years, my lord. I am sure it is the only reason we have received no word from the primarch’s fleet.’

‘Which is why we must take the tower with a sizeable force. With Luther removed from command, there are few of his senior officers that would be willing to initiate conflict between different elements of the Legion. The day-to-day defence of Caliban and the ongoing recruitment process will continue

unaffected, but we will have restored access to external communication. Communication that is currently the sole purview of Luther and his coterie from the Order. Who knows what communiqués they have withheld from us, until now?’

A thin smile on his lips, Temur nodded in appreciation.

‘Apologies, Merir – I think I did you a disservice. Forgive my earlier doubts. Your plan seems eminently suitable, avoiding direct conflict with the bulk of Luther’s forces whilst securing our own position. I do have just one further remark.’

‘Please, speak freely.’

‘You mentioned that we would reinstate the standard Legion protocols and structure until the Lion’s return. Correct me if I am wrong, but with Luther removed would that not make you the highest and longest-serving officer of the Legion? You would, I believe, become a Legion Master...’

Silence fell. Astelan shrugged.

‘It had occurred to me, to be truthful,’ he replied. ‘I was marked for leadership before we discovered Caliban and the old Legion hierarchy was altered to the Wings. To allay any fears about my ambition, in the event that we are successful and a restructuring of the Legion takes place, I must insist that a council of Chapter Masters confirm *any* promotion.’

Tokumon looked at the others and though there were some doubtful faces, most of the officers nodded their assent. ‘I cannot see any further objections at this point. We will continue to sound out those under our command to identify any who cannot be counted upon in the days ahead. We will find suitably distracting duties for them when the time comes to make our move.’

As the gathering broke up, the Space Marines leaving in ones and twos, Lady Tylain turned to Astelan.

‘It seems we have a consensus, my lord. I confess I did not expect things to go so smoothly.’

‘Be careful what you say – there are plenty of opportunities for complications still to come. Remember what I told you. Luther must not have any suspicions of what we are doing, or why. Surprise is essential.’

‘Why thank you, Chapter Master,’ she said with a sneer. ‘And perhaps you would like to instruct me on how to field-strip a lasgun too?’

Astelan offered no apology and the marchesa-colonel did not wait for one. Melian came up to him just as she left.

‘She has a wicked tongue at times, Chapter Master. You should not accept such

insolence.’

‘I need her assistance,’ Astelan replied. ‘Better that she feels in control. For now, at least.’

Melian leaned closer and spoke more quietly.

‘Forgive me, Chapter Master, but I could not help but notice Galedan’s absence.’

‘As Master Temur said, there are some that perhaps would not agree with our decisions today. I spoke with Galedan, and thought it prudent that he... received different orders.’

‘A shame. I liked Galedan.’

‘I am sure he will come to our way of thinking soon enough. For now, do not speak to him again of your concerns. Let him think that I have silenced them.’

‘As you wish. And what would you have me do next?’

Astelan placed a hand on Melian’s shoulder. ‘Nothing, other than keep your eyes and ears open.’

‘And you, Chapter Master, what are you going to do?’

‘Mustering a sizeable number of armed legionaries so close to Redevakh is going to arouse interest. I have a training exercise to organise. Live ammunition, of course.’

It was perhaps a sign of Luther’s growing arrogance that although he commanded tens of thousands of the Legion’s finest, only five of their number were tasked with guarding his private quarters in the citadel of Aldurukh.

Confronted by three Chapter Masters and the same number of company captains with pistols and blades drawn, it was little surprise that they chose not to fight – except one. Astelan watched with detached resignation as the warrior at the security console outside the doors drew his sword.

He hung back, allowing Temur to take the lead.

‘Stand aside, by order of your superiors!’

The warrior vaulted the console, slashing his sword towards Temur’s neck. ‘For Caliban, and the Order!’

The Chapter Master, who had fought in more than a hundred campaigns, blocked the strike easily and, with similar lack of effort, turned his blade back and held it against the legionary’s throat.

‘Do you yield?’

Temur’s demand was made while the others were being disarmed by Neriedes and the rest. The legionary’s only reply was a wordless snarl and a fist, which

glanced from Temur's breastplate as he stepped back.

A second later, the Chapter Master's energy-wreathed sword protruded from the warrior's chest, illuminating his face from below with a blue aura, his features a mask of pained surprise. Temur pulled the blade free with a look of genuine regret, letting the body clatter to the floor. Neriedes and Astelan accepted the necessity of the Space Marine's death without reaction, but the lesser captains paled, realising only now that their coup could never have been bloodless.

That was the tipping point, Astelan noted. There could be no turning back for them.

He pushed forwards to the security console while the remaining captives were secured with electro-manacles.

'No alarm raised, no lockdown.'

His fingers moved across the keypad and behind him the security bolts on the doors snapped open.

Temur's blood was up and he led the way, thrusting open the double doors without delay. They searched the reception hall and the bedchamber and found them empty, although reports had confirmed that Luther would be in his quarters at that hour. Only one room remained – the Grand Master's sanctum, located on the floor above.

Astelan was the last up the stairwell, power sword and bolt pistol at the ready. When Temur reached the doorway at the top he did not pause, but crashed shoulder-first into the timbers, splitting the jamb and sending the door splintering from its hinges.

Luther was stood at a high window, looking south across the lower halls and towers of Aldurukh. He had been a large man, broad at the shoulders, thick at the neck, even before the augmentations wrought upon him by the Legion's Apothecaries. There was a dry, cracked quality to his skin, and artificially reinforced veins bulged in his neck as he tensed.

The Grand Master of the Order held a large book bound in deep red leather, a small dagger used as a bookmark on the open pages. He snapped the book shut and turned calmly, his expression guarded as he looked at the intruders with a raised eyebrow.

'What manner of entrance is this? If you had but asked, I would gladly have granted you an audience.'

Temur was in no mood for Luther's humour, and held his bolt pistol to the Grand Master's head. 'By the authority of the Emperor of Mankind, I charge you with perverting command of the First Legion, for insubordination to the orders

of your primarch, and sundry other charges to be detailed at a later time. You are to disarm yourself and relinquish all command of Caliban and its forces.'

Luther's gaze settled on Astelan, standing by the door.

'You too, Merir? I thought you were wiser than this. Do you know what manner of calamity you are about to unleash? You cannot possibly believe that this farce will succeed.'

'I thought you might harbour doubts about my sincerity,' Astelan replied. 'Permit me to allay them.' He placed a small hololithic receiver on the desk and activated his vox. 'Begin transmission.'

It was Lady Tylain that answered. '*Connection established, Chapter Master. Ready to move on your command.*'

The hololith sprang into life, showing a needle-like tower that rose from lightly forested hills. Luther looked more closely at the grainy image. 'Redevakh? The astropath facility...'

'It is.'

Astelan manipulated the display to focus on the main valley leading to the tower. Several thousand legionaries were advancing through the hills, flanked by battle tanks and walkers from the defence force. Even in the projected light of the hololith, it was clear that most of the Space Marines were clad in the black livery of the original Terran Chapters, but some sported plates of dark green showing that they had been raised on Caliban.

Luther straightened, his expression unreadable.

'I see.'

'Not yet. Continue to observe.' Astelan activated the link again. 'Marchesa-colonel, please execute your orders. This instruction cannot be countermanded.'

'*Affirmative, Chapter Master. All units are in position, commencing action immediately. Let us hope that history remembers us fondly, or not at all.*'

The lead elements of the rebel Space Marine force were almost in position when a succession of bright flashes broke the gloom beneath the treeline. A moment later detonations bloomed among the ranks of advancing warriors, followed almost instantly by the reverberating impacts of shells over the vox-link. The escorting armoured vehicles ploughed to a stop, and turned their turrets on the Dark Angels.

Jets screamed in from the clouds and more tanks rumbled into view while detachments of defence force soldiers emerged from the trees at a run. With them was a full Chapter of Space Marines, the company banner of Captain Galedan flying above the command section. More concussive blasts shook the

advancing rebels as bombs and tank cannons laid down a carpet of destructive fire.

Temur was aghast. ‘Damn them, what are they doing?’

He and the other rebel officers in the sanctum chamber were transfixed by the holo-display, but Luther’s stare snapped up to Astelan. In that instant, there was recognition in his eyes.

Armour shattered and flesh sizzled as Astelan’s first cut took off Temur’s pistol hand. Luther was already moving towards Neriedes, the dagger from the book held before him. Astelan’s sword parted Temur’s throat even as he turned in shock towards his attacker, and a third strike lanced through the chest of Captain Azraphal. Luther pushed the point of the dagger into Neriedes’ left eye, driving it up to the hilt in the socket as he rode the collapsing Space Marine to the ground.

The bark of bolt pistols seemed deafening in the confines of the chamber and Astelan flinched, feeling an impact on his left pauldron. He spun and returned fire, dropping Captain Gosswyn at close range.

Captain Orhn backed away from him, readying his sword to strike instead at Luther, before the Grand Master could rise. Astelan did not hesitate, hacking off the captain’s head with two ragged blows.

He glanced back at the hololith, seeing the rebel ranks capitulating to Galedan and Lady Tylain. Surrounded by Imperial armour divisions and their Legion brothers, with devastating airpower above, Astelan did not blame them.

‘I hoped more of them would surrender...’ he murmured breathlessly.

Luther watched them throwing down their weapons, the column disintegrating in shame before Astelan’s forces. The vox-link brought confirmation from Lady Tylain.

*‘Captain Galedan is formally accepting the surrender, Chapter Master. The rebels have little desire to fight other Space Marines. My forces will continue to provide overwatch and support.’*

‘My thanks, marchesa-colonel,’ Astelan replied. ‘You have done us a great service today. Have the rebels brought to Aldurukh for the judgement of Lord Luther.’

Luther grunted in derision. ‘Twice-cursed, to be traitors *and* cowards. However, I praise your foresight in not ordering them all executed.’

‘It seemed wasteful. They might be taught to see the error of their ways. I hear that the Order can be... very persuasive.’

‘Indeed. Though I am not sure where we will keep so many prisoners.’

‘There are dungeons beneath the Rock. I suggest you carve out more cells.’

Luther turned his head to regard Astelan coldly. ‘Why not alert me to this uprising before now? All bloodshed could have been avoided, had you informed me when you first learned of the rebellion.’

‘I drew out those truly committed to your downfall. Open action against you justifies this response, without question.’

‘And at what point did you choose to betray them?’

‘I prefer to think that I “remained loyal”, my lord,’ Astelan replied, bowing his head.

‘You did not answer the question.’

‘From the outset, of course.’

‘I find that curious. You are Terran, and your distaste for Caliban and its people is known. Was it out of loyalty? Perhaps you saw that the rebellion was doomed from the beginning and wished to curry favour with the winning side. Was power your desire, to return to the glories of command and... relevance?’

‘Nothing so devious, my lord. My reasons for supporting you are simple – I do not know everything that has transpired between you and the Lion, but I can tell that you no longer work to his aims.’

Astelan gathered his thoughts.

‘When the Emperor exterminated my people, I did not lament. I saw that the execution of power could be righteous, even if it brought misery. To oppose it was pointless, a meaningless act of vanity that would end in death. When I was drawn into the Legion, I became a facet of that power – an element of its application. Now I see that a different power is rising, and it is similarly futile to decry it.’ He rested his sword’s tip upon the floor. ‘I prefer action to clever words, Grand Master. The Lion is a taint. All that has befallen the First Legion since we discovered your benighted world is due to his misguided influence. To oppose him, to set myself against the woes he has caused us, I would pledge allegiance to a more worthy lord. Tell me I was wrong, that you are fully committed and loyal to the primarch, and I will join those prisoners right now.’

Luther’s thoughtful silence proclaimed more than any words ever could.

The rebel legionaries were interred in barracks and guard rooms, watched over by Luther’s troops, while the most senior dissenters were escorted to the cells beneath Aldurukh. Astelan waited at the main gate with Galedan, watching the procession of dejected warriors filing past.

‘Luther approved your promotion to Chapter Master, then.’

‘He did,’ Galedan replied. ‘The first favours spilling from the hand of our new

overlord?’

‘No. Confirmation that he shares my faith in you.’

Astelan saw Melian, but the captain turned his head away in disgust, not willing even to look at his former master. Astelan looked back to Galedan.

‘I’m glad he survived.’

‘Melian? Yes, he’s a good captain – it’s a shame he got himself caught up in this mess. He’ll be useful later.’

‘Later? What do you mean?’

‘You can’t fool me, brother. I know that Luther is our ally for the moment, but don’t expect me to believe for a second that you really think he is your *superior*.’

‘I am shocked at the suggestion,’ Astelan replied. ‘There can only be *one* Master of the First. I will not suffer the Lion any longer, so that leaves us with Luther.’

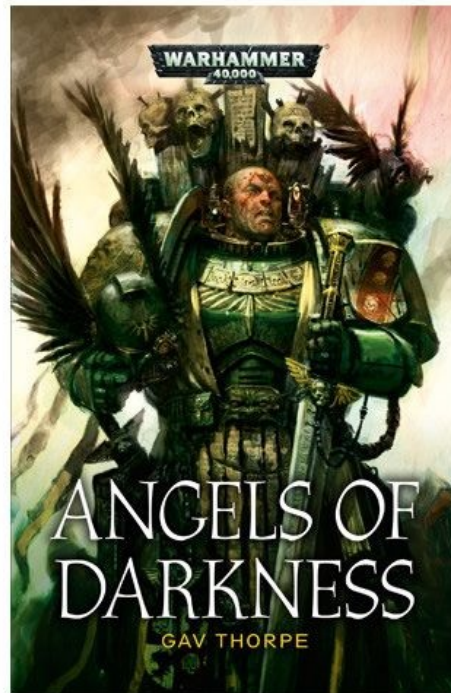
Galedan looked unconvinced, and Astelan could not meet his gaze without a smile.

‘For now, at least.’

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Gav Thorpe** is the author of the Horus Heresy novel *Deliverance Lost*, as well as the novellas *Corax: Soulforge*, *Ravenlord* and *The Lion*, which formed part of the *New York Times* bestselling collection *The Primarchs*. He is particularly well-known for his Dark Angels stories, including the Legacy of Caliban series. His Warhammer 40,000 repertoire further includes the Path of the Eldar series, the Horus Heresy audio dramas *Raven's Flight*, *Honour to the Dead* and *Raptor*, and a multiplicity of short stories. For Warhammer, Gav has penned the End Times novel *The Curse of Khaine*, the Time of Legends trilogy, *The Sundering*, and much more besides. He lives and works in Nottingham.

Ten thousand years later, one of Luther's Fallen Dark Angels is captured by the Chapter and reveals his view on the Legion's slide into heresy.



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