



## **Stone and Iron - Perturabo.**

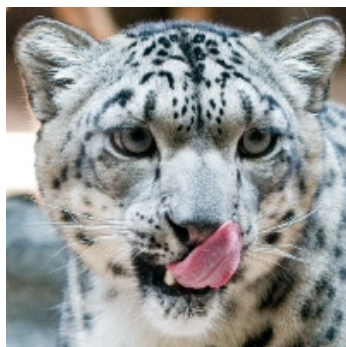
An Horus Heresy Primarchs Audio Drama (2017)

**Written** by Robbie MacNiven

**Performed** by Tim Bruce, Cliff Chapman, Steve Conlin, Matthew Hunt, Jonathan Keeble and Andrew Wincott

**Scripted** by Reverend

**Created** by



&





Morrix (over vox): “We’ve gained the eastern redoubt<sup>6</sup>. I am pressing on into their artillery reserves”.

Perturabo (displeased): “You have already suffered excessive casualties thanks to your premature assault. Now you are exceeding your orders with unnecessary aggression. The 103rd will hold its position”.

Morrix (after a small pause): “Affirmative, my lord”.

Ferrix carried on in Perturabo’s shadow. The Primarch’s stride unfaltering even as an ork cannon above discharged directly at him.

(orks roaring at Perturabo)

The detonation barely a dozen paces ahead of Perturabo battered the Iron Warriors with a hail of metal and dirt. Ferrix’s armor chimed with warnings and he felt stabs of pain in his thigh and shoulder, his transhuman physiology quickly suppressing the minor wounds. He did not have time to assess the damage. Ahead his Primarch had broken into a charge. The Hammer of Olympia covered the last few yards amidst the storm of shot and shell mounting the ork’s hastily erected redoubt like a rampaging titan. Coming up behind him Ferrix saw the Primarch silhouetted against the blaze of his gauntlet-mounted combibolters.

(Perturabo unleashing a war cry)

Perturabo opened fire into the greenskins igniting the few orks not blown to pieces by the pointblank barrage with his specialized plasmic rounds.

Perturabo: “They are withdrawing. Focus fire to the left, enfilade the western bastion”.

As Ferrix reached the redoubt beside Perturabo he saw that Captain Metellus was correct. The greenskins directly ahead had broken before the cold fury of the Iron Warriors’ Primarch, fleeing back down the reverse side of the slope. The assault’s Iron Havocs<sup>9</sup> were already using the beachhead to bring fire down on the orks still entrenched further west, pushing them off the hilltop. Beneath Ferrix the crude ork artillery lay abandoned surrounded by the smoldering bloody remains of those xenos who had attempted to stand before the Iron Warriors’ Primarch.

Perturabo (over vox): “Sappers to the front! I want ramparts and revetments thrown up along the western slope. Fix the artillery positions to the rear. All Company commanders to attend me immediately”.

As the Grand Battalion’s officers rallied from across the hilltop, Ferrix took the moment’s pause to survey the hill’s surroundings. Behind, to the south-east, the Iron Warriors’ drop site was visible, a rocky valley basin now packed with armor and artillery being deposited via heavy landers.

(immense lander flying overhead)

Lander’s pilot (over vox): “Reserve company deployed, my lord. The heavy armor wave is inbound”.

Perturabo had elected to assault the hilltop immediately rather than stand amidst the ork shelling waiting for the armored support to drop. The attack had also been part of the test. The 33rd Grand Battalion was unbloodied, freshly reconstituted after the slaughter on Parigax. Each of their officers, Ferrix included, was under trial.

Metellus (over vox): “The greenskins are still assaulting the wall to the west”.

Ferrix followed his gaze. Below in a wider grassier depression the bulk of the ork horde was continuing its attack on a squat series of rockrete bulwarks, bastions and ramparts ringed by a glacis and a razor wire filled mote.

Ferrix (over vox): “The banner on the utmost rampart is that of the VII Legion”.

Morrix (ironically over vox): “Imperial Fists, hah, what do they know of siege craft?”

Earth shifters and serf laborers were clambering the slope and setting to work on the west side of the hill throwing up defensive works with a speed and cold precision only the IV Legion was capable of. While the work began, the 33rd’s Captains gathered around their Primarch, the Hammer of Olympia towering over his sons like an ironclad mountain. Morrix was among them, but Perturabo did not address him directly.

Morrix (over vox): “The greenskins broke before our iron. I have rarely seen them run so easily. The 103rd Company could have pursued them all the way back to whatever turgid wasteland they crawled from”.

Perturabo said nothing not deigning to look at his Captain. As much as he disliked Morrix Ferrix found it difficult not to cringe with discomfort at their father's cold response to his brash words. The post-combat data scrolling across the visor uplinks of the Battalion's officers showed that Morrix's exuberant push on the orks' eastern defenses had resulted in almost 30% more casualties for the 103rd Company. Perturabo raised one great metal gauntlet and pointed down towards the embattled fortress in the valley below.

Perturabo: "Analysis. Tell me what you see".

Craxus, Captain of the 105th, was the first to answer.

Craxus: "A Dorn-patterned star fortress. Small. Estimated Company size garrison. Ill sited. It is overlooked by superior positions to the east and north-west".

Perturabo: "Who commands it?"

Metellus: "The heraldry belongs to Captain Markus Vorans of the VII Legion's 5th Company, 10th Battalion. He is considered one of the Legion's most experienced defensive wall holders".

Morrix (over vox): "Oh perhaps he can hold a wall, but he is fool when it comes to siting them. As Craxus says it is overlooked from this hilltop. Had we not stormed it, the xenos artillery would already have leveled this little outpost".

Metellus: "I doubt the greenskins were responsible for the rudimentary works here. It appears the Fists were planning on constructing outworks before the attack forced them to abandon the unfinished redoubts. The orks occupied them and now we have them".

Perturabo: "The answer is not so simple. Wait and watch and perhaps you will begin to understand. Much can be learned from an enemy, but even more from an ally".

\* \* \*

(greenskins charging the Imperial Fists' defenses)

The VII Legion's 5th Company held the wall. Captain Vorans slapped home a fresh magazine and leaned over the parapet opening fire on the greenskins crawling up the rockrete face. He emptied the clip into them, inaccurate return shots cracking from the bastion's face and his scarred yellow power armor. In what seemed like just a few double heartbeats the bolter was clacking empty again. He moved back, the gap on the

fire step replaced by brother Cosburk. The voice of Sergeant Oskan clicked in his ear.

Oskan (over vox): "Bastion six is overrun, commander. Sergeant Pietus requests permission to engage with the reserve".

Vorans (over vox): "Granted. Oskan, bring your own squad and link with me at bastion four".

Oskan (over vox): "Affirmative, commander".

Vorans moved back from the bastion towards the central keep, reloading as he went. The situation was desperate. The greenskins had been throwing themselves at the outpost for almost eight hours without pause, heedless of the dead they were heaping up all around the jagged angles of the bastions and redoubts. The mote was entirely choked with alien corpses, the razor wire crushed. Had it not been for the IV Legion storming the hill overlooking the defenses, Vorans knew they would have already been overrun. Yet now it seemed the Iron Warriors were content to simply sit on their hilltop and watch.

There was a clatter of battle plate as Oskan and the remnants of his assault cadre approached from across the fort's parade ground. They'd been counterattacking ork breakthroughs all day and their proud yellow battle plate and heavy chainswords were befouled with thick strings of stinking xenos gore.

Vorans: "Well met, Sergeant Oskan. How fare is the gatehouse?"

Oskan (regaining his breath): "We are holding, commander, but I doubt we can keep them out for long. Sergeant Ganth has sworn to defend the breach to the last bolt round".

Vorans: "Well, that may not be very long even at our current rate of fire. Have you received any word from the Iron Warriors?"

Oskan: "Not since their request we abandon the hilltop and provide exact details of our order of battle. Their communication channels remain locked".

Vorans: "Are they really so wary to defense that they insist on sitting on their hill and fortifying it while we fight and die beneath them".

Oskan: "It appears they have brought up artillery as well".

Vorans looked up at the hilltop overlooking the fort, where the sunlight picked out the silver gleam of IV Legion's armor and the long barrels of

their heavy guns freshly entrenched. The Imperial Fist cursed again as the magnitude of the Iron Warrior's inactivity became even more apparent.

Vorans: "Why do they delay? Those guns could break this assault in an instant"

Oskan: "Sergeant Katro claims he has heard the voice of their Primarch across the vox net".

Vorans: "If Perturabo himself is up there what does that mean? The IV Legion as a whole? There must be reasoning behind their hesitance".

(bastion walls collapsing)

Oskan: "The greenskins have broken the bastion nine again, sir".

Vorans: "I'll bring second squad up and contain the breach. Return to the gate and support Sergeant Ganth. We have no choice but to try and hold our positions. Keep one ear to the vox and hope the Hammer of Olympia shakes off his lethargy. If not we will all be dead before nightfall".

\* \* \*

Perturabo and the 33rd Grand Battalion's officers watched as the ork attacks continued. Schematics of the fort and initial deployments supplied by the Imperial Fists themselves in a data burst were overlaying the visor displays of the Iron Warriors as they took in the storm assault's every aspect. Ferrix highlighted part of the fort's display for his brothers with a blink click.

Ferrix: "This is their greatest weakness, the ninth bastion. Due to the angle of the gatehouse and the main redoubt it is the first to be hit with the overspill from any assault coming down the valley. It was not built expecting such pressure".

Perturabo: "You are correct".

Ferrix felt his fellow officers bristle. Everyone of them was desperate to earn the Primarch's approval and the fact that a Techmarine and not a bastion commander had won it – rankled. For his own part Perturabo said little or nothing in response to his subordinates' appraisals. The new Battalion was being tested, and the results would likely remain private.

Metellus: "According to my estimates their ammunition will be wholly expended around an hour after sunset".

Morrix: "Not that long. At current rate of expenditure they have half an hour at most remaining".

Again Metellus visibly stiffened at his fellow Captain's response, but dared say nothing in the presence of the Primarch. If Perturabo was aware of the silent bitterness passing between his officers, he made no indication of it.

Craxus: "If they can disengage from the outer bastions and offer a tighter defense from the central keep I'll give them a few hours yet".

Ferrix: "Lord, I..."

Perturabo (interrupting): "We have been observing this assault for almost three hours. In that time none of you had done anything other than heaped scorn and derision on the defensive works below. You disappoint me. Captain Vorans is one of the Imperial Fists' foremost wall holders. From the works you yourselves have raised on this hill and the opinions you have offered it is clear not one of you would be able to construct the defenses the VII Legion has here or hold them against an equivalent xenos attack for more than five hours".

Metellus was the first to find his voice and respond.

Metellus: "But lord, their siting... They abandoned this hilltop without a fight and let themselves utterly exposed. Had we not stormed these positions they would be already overrun".

Perturabo: "They abandoned it because I ordered them to. They abandoned it because I told them I would secure this hill and prevent any xenos bombardment. You all know not to underestimate an enemy, but neither should you let rivalry cause you to underestimate an ally. They are stone and we are iron. Both have strengths, both have weaknesses. We are here so that you may learn of both. I see there is still much to teach you, but we are out of time".

(after a pause)

Perturabo (commanding): "Artillery Master Larx, you may open fire".

Larx: "Aye, my lord. All batteries, fire!"

(artillery unleashing a torrent of shells)

\* \* \*

The Imperial Fists had to use the last of the flamer promethium to burn the mountain of orks blocking the broken gateway. Once a light they were able to dozer blade away enough charred corpses to allow access to the fort. Sergeant Oskan approached Vorans over the bodies of friend and foe, his armor bloodied and scarred.

Oskan: "Word from the Scouts, Captain. The orks are gone. The last stragglers are still withdrawing to the north".

Vorans: "Thank you, Sergeant".

Oskan: "The Iron Warriors' counterattack broke them before we were overrun".

Vorans (grimly): "It could come sooner".

The Imperial Fist tried to master the bitterness in his voice. He stood before the open gateway while around him his brethren continued to gather their own wounded, stripping precious battle plate from the dead and dumping ork corpses over the walls. The stench of burning xenos meat was penetrating even the Space Marine's armor seal.

Vorans: "Do we have a final casualty count, Sergeant?"

Oskan: "We are still waiting, sir. It's estimated to be over 50%".

Vorans felt none to it all, his body awash with the aches of post-combat flush as his systems drained of combat-stims and his secondary heart decelerated. Perhaps there would be anger but it had not come yet. The Iron Warriors were occupying the valley. Beyond the fort's walls fat-bellied landers were arching down through the night sky, ferrying super heavy armor to the planet's surface.

(Perturabo and his retinue entering the fort)

An entourage from the strike force that had eventually collapsed the ork's flank was also entering in through the gateway. In the midst of the gaggle of honor guard and officers was their leader, a giant slab of battle-scarred iron that dwarfed those surrounding him. Sergeant Katro had been correct. Perturabo himself was leading his sons. His presence only increased the desolate feeling that had crept over Vorans.

The IV Legion halted before him and their Primarch raised his fist in salute. Vorans mirrored the motion automatically, though he did not bend the knee.

Perturabo: "Captain Vorans of the VII, my compliments on your defense. It was well made".

Vorans: "My thanks, lord. It would have been even better made had you struck sooner".

Perturabo's officers (at the background): "How dare you... Who does this Fist think he is?"

The words elicited aggressive mutterings from the Iron Warriors but if their Primarch took offence, it didn't show on his firm features or in his cold slate grey eyes.

Perturabo: "Had we come to your aid immediately, my officers here would have been deprived of the lessons you taught them, Captain. You must forgive the 33rd Grand Battalion. They are newborns with much still to learn".

Vorans: "My lessons?"

Perturabo: "The construction of your fortifications and how you carried out their defense. It was imperfect, certainly, but far more adept than anything they could yet master".

Vorans cast about struggling to understand, taking in the bodies of his men being removed to the keep and the orks still being hauled from the gateway's wrecked remains.

Vorans: "You are saying you delayed your assault so that you could observe how we fought, how my men died?"

Perturabo: "As I said it was a commendable defense. Some learned from it, others did not. My own Captain Metellus was certainly among the latter".

The Primarch made a court gesture and circle of his honor guards snatched one of his officers and pulled him forward. The Iron Warrior began to protest, but one of his brothers struck him a ringing blow around the helmet silencing him. The Primarch addressed him directly.

Perturabo: "You wasted resources during the attack on the hilltop, Metellus, and you disobeyed my instructions for no gain. You are not fit to command in my Legion".

Perturabo reached forward and clutched the grim iron skull, the symbol of the Legion, embossed on Metellus's breast plate. With a shriek of

rending metal the Primarch tore the symbol away ripping power cables and carapace dermal nodes out with it.

Perturabo: "You are hereby stripped of your rank not only before your brothers, but before the VII Legion as well. You are demoted to the rank of regular in the 5th Company. If you disobey orders again I will personally see you lobotomized".

The Primarch turned to depart, his warriors with him. Vorans called after him, disbelief still warring with anger, his voice rising above the shriek of more incoming troop landers.

Vorans: "You are leaving?"

Perturabo turned back. A smile as chill as the unyielding metal that encased him tugged at the corners of his thin lips.

Perturabo: "We go in pursuit of the greenskins. If we had struck sooner my commanders would have wasted more lives than necessary and perhaps yours would have been counted among them. The Iron Warriors will complete the purge. Your warriors may rest. You have played your part".

Vorans: "That's it then. You watched my brothers die and now you leave without another word".

Perturabo: "Yes, and herein lies the final lesson. You appear like stone, Imperial Fist, but you merely clad yourself in it. My Legion and I, we are not only sheathed in iron. We are iron, both without and within".