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# SINS OF THE FATHER

*Andy Smillie*

As the Tempest of Angels nears its end, Sanguinius  
considers the destiny of his chosen sons

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# SINS OF THE FATHER

**Andy Smillie**

*In my darker moments, I do not love my sons.*

Sanguinius was unmoving as the blades clashed around him. His thoughts weighed upon him like the press of time. They rooted him in place, immobile at the centre of the duelling stone as the two combatants exchanged blows.

*In these moments, I dwell on what is to come.*

Garbed in a simple robe, the beauty of his form eclipsed the many statues and sculptures bordering the chamber, deep within the Fortress of Hera. A numinous, angelic being, he was an ode to the beauty and strength of the Emperor's creations.

And to all save his father, the furrow in his brow would have gone unnoticed.

*My sons will never rise to my virtue. They will remain as tarnished mirrors, shining in poor reflection of a greatness my death will rob from them. They do not have the valour to rise against the curse of their blood. Except...*

*Except, perhaps, for these two.*

The Tempest of Angels was a perilous ritual. Sanguinius stood at its eye, as the blades of the Flesh Tearer and the Saviour whirled about him. He followed the ebb and flow of the duel, appraising the strength and skill of the pair as they snarled and railed against one another.

*My father cast me in the image of an angel. A divine protector or a wrathful destroyer, he has never said. It is a quirk of his nature to create that which might surprise his knowing. He has left it for me to decide how history shall record my deeds.*

Sanguinius closed his eyes, letting his mind drift back to the Triumph at Ullanor. He had always felt alone. Even then. Even in the presence of so many of his brothers. He saw each of their faces, caught the glimmer of unfolding destiny

in their eyes.

*My brothers suffer from no such indecision. Magnus is no warrior and Angron no tactician. Their paths were chosen for them, freeing them from the burden of such questions.*

Sparks danced across Sanguinius's face as the combatants' blades clashed once more. The twin slivers of Baalite steel were anger-hot with friction.

*Destroyer. Protector. I am cursed to see the ends of each of these paths, and I know of the pain to turn from either. In my weakness, I tread the line of both.*

He opened his eyes. The combatants fought almost on top of him, their furious cuts and thrusts warming his skin.

*But these two, these flawed sons of mine, they walk only a single path.*

Driven by murderous intent, a blade angled towards Sanguinius's throat. The primarch remained still, and lived – the Flesh Tearer's kill-stroke denied by the blade of the Saviour.

*Azkaellon, chief among my Sanguinary Guard, is my greatest protector. The gold and bronze of his armour serves as an echo of the purity he carries in his hearts. Driven by duty, by pride, he is a masterful swordsman, his strokes balanced, measured and poised.*

Azkaellon grunted with effort and shouldered his opponent back away from the primarch.

*Amit, Captain of the Fifth Company, a warrior born. He would fight until the stars burned cold. His armour carries the scars others reserve for their souls. Caked in blood, it is stained the deepest crimson. He is a destroyer, fighting with the fury of a berzerker. His brutal blows allow for no defence.*

Amit growled, regaining his footing and redoubling his attack.

*Their single-mindedness will see them outlive me. It gives them the strength to do what others cannot.*

*And yet, I have foreseen a future without angels...*



*Ka'Bandha roars in triumph as my body breaks against the ground. Satisfied in his vengeance, he beats his wings and hurls himself into a distant melee.*

*I lie still.*

*'No!' Azkaellon's cry is one of rage and anguish.*

*He runs to me. Ignoring the calls of his warriors as he abandons them.*

*'L-lord...' he stammers, and falls to his knees.*

*He pulls me close, cradling my body against his own. My head rests upon his sculpted breastplate. My features are as they are now – virginal and unbroken.*

*'Father,' Azkaellon shakes me, driven frantic by grief as he searches for the life that no longer beats within me. 'He is dead...' He turns his gaze skyward, searching for some deity who would denounce his claim. 'Our father Sanguinius is dead!'*

*Around him, parts of the Palace blaze incandescently in their death-throes. Fire consumes the ground and broils over the towering walls. Ichorous flesh burns like oil, stripped from corpses and the still-living by gods bent on annihilation.*

*'How... how can this be?' Removing his helm, Azkaellon casts his gaze around, as though seeing the world with his own eyes might change its appearance. It does not.*

*Hell surrounds him. An absence of hope so absolute as to render the Blood Angel prostrate, his blade slipping from his grasp. His brothers are dying. Red-skinned daemons eviscerate them with barbed claws, while others hack them apart with obsidian blades. So fast are their enemies that the Blood Angels seem to fight in slow motion, the bark of their boltguns drowned out by the snarling of the beasts that they fight.*

*It is a mosaic of carnage and madness, a nightmare made real. It is the end of all things.*

*'Lord! Lord Azkaellon, you must fight.'*

*Azkaellon glances up at the Blood Angel standing over him. The warrior's armour is scorched black, charred by unnatural fire.*

*'My lord, we need your blade.'*

*Anger mixed with desperation twists the Blood Angel's face into a snarl.*

*'He... he is gone. We are undone,' Azkaellon's voice is hollow, stripped of emotion by despair.*

*'Commander Azkaellon, we need you! We cannot—'*

*The Blood Angel's head and torso vanish in a flash of crimson lightning, vaporized by some ensorcelled weapon of the enemy.*

*Azkaellon looks down at the Blood Angel's remains, losing himself in the expanding pool of blood as it spreads across the floor.*

*'We are lost...'*

*Amit stumbles forward. Alone in a vast desert, lost amongst the shifting red dunes that stretch in every direction, he has only his rage to sustain him. He has followed his prey there, bleeding his own warriors into annihilation to do so. The sand beneath his feet is not crushed rock – it is a reminder of that gore-riven battle. He walks on the dust of the dead, hills of blood that have been dried and baked by the eight suns blazing overhead.*

*‘I will find you.’*

*Amit’s voice is a rasping snarl, worn raw by those same four words.*

*The daemon laughs in response. It is a mocking growl, a rumble of contempt that echoes all around like primal thunder.*

*Amit thrusts his blade to the sky. ‘You cannot hide from my blade, daemon. Not forever. I will find you, and I will kill you.’*

*The crimson heavens crackle with fire. A lash of the daemon’s will tears across it, opening a ragged wound in the firmament. Blood, crimson and dark, falls in a vengeful downpour.*

*‘That will not stop me,’ Amit snarls.*

*He is wrong.*

*The blood-rain falls in a thickening torrent, driving Amit from his feet and churning the dunes beneath him into a thick sludge.*

*‘Face me, daemon,’ Amit spits, grunting with effort as he struggles forward, fighting in vain to keep his bulk from sinking into the mire. ‘Coward. Fight me!’*

*Frustration cuts him like a blade as the ground drinks its fill, and becomes as an ocean. Helpless, the lord of the Flesh Tearers sinks into the crimson abyss.*

*‘No!’*

*Amit’s cry is practically inaudible, swallowed by bloody waves that growl as they break.*

*He tries to rise, to swim to the surface, but the blood is too thick, his armour too heavy. He sinks downwards, down into the depths of murder that form the world.*

*‘No...’*

*The thick, arterial liquid fills his lungs, dragging him downwards until he strikes the sea bed; an undulating landscape of polished skulls. Hundreds of thousands of them crowd the bedrock.*

*And yet, there is space for one more.*



‘Stop.’

At Sanguinius’s command, Amit and Azkaellon put up their blades.

‘Switch places.’

‘Lord?’ Azkaellon’s brow creased in confusion.

‘Azkaellon, you will attack. Amit, you will defend me.’

‘Lord, I have not the temperam—’

‘No, Amit, you do not,’ Sanguinius voice was hard but his eyes held no malice. ‘You fight to kill with no concern for survival. And you, Azkaellon,’ Sanguinius shifted his gaze to the other Blood Angel. ‘You fight only to protect with no consideration to what survival might mean.’

Azkaellon held up a hand in protest. ‘I fight for the Legion, for the memory of the Emperor and the Imperium-that-was.’

‘No, you do not,’ Sanguinius shook his head. ‘You fight for your own honour. You fight for me.’

Azkaellon looked pained, as though stung by a blade. ‘And what cause could be greater?’

‘It is not a sin, and it has served you well. But it is not enough. When this new Imperium falls, and we have all been cast down... When I am gone, who will you fight for then?’

Azkaellon’s eyes flashed with anger. ‘Lord, that will not—’

‘You are so certain of a future that was hidden even from my father?’

‘Lord... forgive me,’ Azkaellon bowed his head in deference.

‘And you, Amit, you fight because the din of battle brings you peace.’

Amit looked away, unable to hold his lord’s gaze.

‘There will come a time when the cries of those you have led to death will drown out the roar in your veins. There will come a time when you must defend what little we have left.’

Amit said nothing, his jaw clenched tight.

‘Now...’ Sanguinius returned to his position at the centre of the duelling stone. ‘Switch places.’

Without another word, Amit and Azkaellon changed positions, and readied their blades.

‘My life is in your hands, my sons. Do not waste it.’

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Andy Smillie** is best known for his visceral Flesh Tearers novellas, *Sons of Wrath* and *Flesh of Cretacia*, and the novel *Trial by Blood*. He has also written a host of short stories starring this brutal Chapter of Space Marines and a number of audio dramas including *The Kauyon*, *Blood in the Machine*, *Deathwolf*, *From the Blood* and *At Slaughter's End*.

The Flesh Tearers are a Chapter on the brink of destruction, brought low by their gene-curse, the Black Rage and constantly fighting to maintain their sanity and nobility.



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