

THE HORUS HERESY®

INTO EXILE

Aaron Dembski-Bowden



Renowned Mechanicum technoarchaeologist
Arkhan Land is evacuated from Mars

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10

Gritty ochre dust clings to the dead warrior's open eyes. A shadow retreats from his stilled form, something immense yet hunched, something with rattling joints and grinding metal claws. It strides away, limping badly, its orders unfulfilled, its masters informed.

The legionary lies in the dirt, his duty done.

9

The scholar sits hunched in the chamber of stinking steel and bleeding bodies, breathing in the scorched scents of mangled automata and riven human flesh. The creature on his shoulder bears no small resemblance to a species of simian detailed in the archives of Ancient Terra. Its name is Sapien. The scholar named it himself when he constructed the creature from vat-cloned fur and consecrated metals.

The psyber-monkey gives a worried chitter at their surroundings. The scholar feels no such unease, only disgusted irritation. He sneers at these charnel house surroundings, this place of the ruined and the wounded that is supposedly his salvation.

The arched walls shake around him. Outside the ascending ship, the sky of Sacred Mars is on fire. Far below, Nicanor will be dead by now. Butchered, no

less. The fool.

Arkhan Land huddles like some filthy refugee amidst the other survivors, praying to the Omnissiah that the reek of their cowardice and failure won't infect him.

Sapien scampers to Land's other shoulder. He chitters again, the tone wordless yet curiously inquisitive.

'He *was* a fool,' the scholar murmurs, idly stroking the cog-like vertebrae plates that made up the little creature's spine. 'Space Marines,' he snorts the words. 'They are all fools.'

But even to himself, those words ring a little hollow this time.

8

Nicanor stares into his slayer's eyes. His own blood marks the bulbous golden domes of the war machine's visual actuators, blood that he coughed into the thing's face right after it drove the crackling, motorised spear through his breastplate. It keeps him aloft, impaled, his boots scarcely scraping the dust that makes up the useless yet priceless Martian soil. Each scuff smears away the red-brown regolith to reveal greyer earth beneath – a secret of the Red Planet concealed mere inches beneath the surface, yet unknown to most capable of conjuring the world's image in their imaginations.

The machine leans in closer, the domes of its insect eyes inspecting the prey, recording Nicanor's face and the markings upon his armour. The dying warrior hears the clicking whirr of an open transmission sluice as his killer exloads its findings to its distant masters.

This is prey. It knows that in the processes of its murderously simple consciousness.

But this is the wrong prey.

Nicanor swallows the pain. He doesn't cower from it and he refuses to let it consume him. Pain is felt only by the living, and thus it is nothing to regret. Pain is life. Pain can be overcome as long as breath resides in the human, and transhuman, body. He will die, he knows this, but he will not die ashamed. Honour is everything.

Blood falls from Nicanor's clenched teeth as the war machine shakes him, seeking to dislodge him from the toothed length of its spear-limb. The lance is buried too deeply in his innards, clutched by reinforced bone and armour plate, and refusing to easily come free. He feels his left boot connect with his fallen

boltgun, the ceramite clanking against the gun's kill-marked metal body. Even if he could twist to reach for it without tearing himself in two, the weapon is empty. Through his reddened gaze he still sees the scorched pockmarks cratering the robot's head, where every bolt he fired found its target.

The war machine lowers its spear, slamming the impaled warrior hard against the dusty ground, and its taloned foot crunches down on Nicanor's limp form for leverage. With a brace and a wrench of machinery joints, the lance tears free in a fresh scattershot of bloody ceramite and cooling gore.

The disembowelling also pulls the last breath from what remains of Nicanor's body. He stares up, strengthless and silent, and he sees nothing in the robot's implacable eye domes. There is no hint of intelligence or sign of who might be watching through the automaton's retinal feed.

His greying gaze slides skyward, slipping from the hunched and bolt-blasted carapace of his mechanical slayer. There, rising into the embattled sky, is the silhouette of the scholar's transport vessel.

It would be poetic to say that this is Nicanor's final thought, and victory is his final sight. Neither is true. His final thought is of the ruination of his breastplate, where the symbol of the Raptor Imperialis had shown so proud in ivory upon the golden-yellow plate. His last sight is of Mondus Occulum, where subterranean foundries and bolt shell manufactories burn beneath the Martian rock, and where the last of his brothers' gunships stream into the sky.

The dust in the air begins to settle over his armour, upon his torn body, even on his eyes as they twitch one last time, yet fail to close.

The war machine casts a shadow across his corpse as it records his demise.

7

Land runs, breath sawing from his mouth, spit spraying with each heave. His boots clang up the gang-ramp, which rises already beneath his panicked tread. He doesn't look back, not to bid the Space Marine farewell, not to bear witness to the warrior's final moments. The hammer-crash of Nicanor's discharging boltgun is the last thing that Land hears before the hatch grinds inexorably closed.

There, in the fresh dark, he collapses to his hands and knees, all dignity abandoned. Shaking hands drag the multilens focusing goggles from his face.

Safe, he thinks. *Safe*.

And for some reason the thought feels almost treasonous. Perhaps a lesser man

might consider it guilt. The niggle of a weak soul's conscience, knowing that Nicanor is still out there, selling his life to buy Land's survival.

But pragmatism drowns any pathetic stirring of morality. Conscience and guilt are concepts brought into being by those too meek to face up to their failures, seeking to mark their hesitations as virtues.

He has to survive. That's the beginning and end of it. He matters infinitely more than a single legionary. Nicanor's own actions prove the truth of it.

'*Ascension,*' comes a servitor's bland tones over the chamber-wide vox. The transport begins its rise in shaking inelegance.

Arkhan Land weaves through a compressed sea of moaning, wounded forms, and sits with his back to the chamber wall. Sapien squawks an entirely unsimian sound as he takes his place upon his master's shoulder.

6

'*Run!*' Nicanor's voice, even weakened, is a roar above the wind. '*Run, damn you!*'

He turns with his boltgun braced against his shoulder, trusting that the technoarchaeologist's arrogance and fear will serve even if Nicanor's command fails. The war machine lopes and lurches closer, leaping over the wind-smoothed grey rocks that lie across the Martian surface like the tumbledown shamanic stone circles of Old Earth.

And it is the same machine. It bears the scars that Nicanor already inflicted upon its armour plating with bolter and bomb back in the Mesatan Complex. It sprints forwards on backward-jointed legs, its chain-toothed limbs revving in the silence of its empty rotor cannons.

Nicanor's boltgun barks in futility. Explosive shells strike true, detonating against the stalker-killer's insectoid cranial housing, doing little more than jerking the head with its bulbous golden eyes to the side.

He knows he can't kill it. He knows he doesn't need to. Sigismund didn't send him here to kill this thing.

He drops the bolter the instant his retinal display chimes that his magazine is empty. His power sword flares to life in both hands before the gun has even hit the ground.

The hunting machine could circle around him if its cognitive processes choose to do so, but threat sensors flicker with suggestions of caution. This prey has thwarted it once already, and time is short. The kill must be now, or it will be

never.

It charges, janky legs clanking. Spear-limb joints bunch up, driving back into their piston housings. It leaps, emitting a scrapcode shriek for want of a true battle cry.

Nicanor hurls himself to the side, rolling in the dust and dirt, defacing his damaged armour further by occluding the proud symbols that have stood upon the ceramite for over three decades. His injuries leave him slow, slower than he has ever been. He comes to his knees in a sense-lost haze of disorientation, thrusting upwards with the blade.

It bites. It bites deep, with the snarling kiss of an aggravated power field knifing into sensitive mechanics. Sparks fly in place of blood's spray. He feels the machine buckle above him, its thwarted core straining, the sword buried in the underside of its hip joint threatening to plunge the beast-machine to the ground.

He must live, Nicanor thinks, tasting blood in his mouth. *And he will.*

He pulls the blade free from the crippled war machine in exalted silence, stoic to the last, leaving the bellowing of war shouts for the warriors of lesser Legions that require such pageantry. The sword snaps near the hilt as the machine whines and staggers back.

Nicanor is rising, turning, just in time for the stalker-killer's primary limb to emit a peal of crunching thunder as it pounds through the Space Marine's plastron. It shatters the reinforced casing of his fused ribs, kills the motive force of his Mark II battle armour as it lances through the suit's back-mounted power pack. It annihilates both of his hearts, two of his three lungs, the progenoid gland in his chest.

He coughs blood as the crippled machine drags him up before its alien face. He is grinning when he hears the engine cacophony from the transport lifting off.

'He lives,' he tells his killer. These will be his last words. 'You have failed.'

5

They are almost to the landing site when Arkhan Land realises the severity of the Space Marine's wounds. The warrior's limp becomes a stagger, his stride arrested as he seeks to pull his helmet clear and breathe without the filtration grille. It comes free to reveal a dark face with a typical Terran equatorial skin shade, blood riming the gritted teeth. It is the first time Land has seen the warrior's features. He makes no comment on this because he doesn't care.

Since emerging from the underground complex, there has been no sign of their

pursuer. Ahead across the rusty desert, the orbital lander sits with its gang-ramps down, accepting evacuees and materiel in a shuffling and stumbling trickle.

It is not the ship that Land would have chosen for himself. Nor would he associate with the scavengers and dregs now boarding it, had he any other choice. But it is said that beggars cannot be choosers. The same can be said for refugees.

Without even realising he is doing it, Land shields Sapien from the gathering wind, holding the psyber-monkey in the folds of his magisterial, crimson robe. Sapien accepts this treatment, displaying a fanged maw no natural simian had ever possessed. The expression may possibly be a smile.

‘Space Marine,’ Land calls over the wind.

‘All is well,’ the towering warrior calls back. Plainly, it is a lie. All is anything but well. Nicanor touches a gauntleted hand to the shattered ceramite at his side. The armoured fingers come away red.

‘Your kind do not bleed this much,’ Land accuses him with lazy vehemence. ‘I have read the physiological data myself. In detail.’

‘We bleed this much,’ the Imperial Fist replies, ‘when we are dying.’ He gestures to the segmented evacuation craft being slowly abraded by the rising wind. ‘Keep moving, Technoarchaeologist Land.’

But Land doesn’t keep moving. He fixes his multilens goggles over his eyes, looking back the way they came. Not for the first time, he wishes he was armed. His collection of antiquities boasts many archeotech weapons, the pinnacle of his hoard being a deliciously beautiful sidearm with humming aural dampeners, rotating magnetic vanes, and the capacity to fire micro-atomic rounds. But it – along with many of his possessions – is elsewhere. A significant portion of his priceless finds are safely secured and await him once he reaches the Ring of Iron that surrounds Mars in a sacred dockyard halo.

Even so, he is already cataloguing the innumerable precious items he has been forced to abandon on the planet today.

Evacuation is such a dirty word.

Sapien hisses in his cradle of robes. Land nods as if the sound held some kind of sense, adjusting his goggles’ visual range with a clicking twist of a side dial.

‘Space Marine,’ he says, looking over the dusty plain behind them. ‘Something is approaching from the southern ridge.’

It *had* followed them through the complex, after all. All of those byzantine twists and turns, hoping to put distance between themselves and their foe, had been nothing more than wasted meandering.

The wounded warrior clutches his weapons tighter as he turns. Land hears the click of Nicanor's eye lenses resetting, cancelling their zoomed view.

This ends now, Land thinks. One way or another, this ends now.

'Get to the ship,' the Space Marine says. And when Land moves at a slow, exhausted jog instead of a sprint, Nicanor's temper finally flares. 'Run!' he says, his voice a crack of breaking arctic ice. 'Run, damn you!'

4

They walk through tunnels of flickering light, the power systems feeding the Mesatan Complex failing one by one, falling to abandonment or treachery. Their passage is sung in the sound of their footsteps – the technoarchaeologist's ragged, tired tread, and the Fist's own fading gait.

Nicanor no longer disguises his limp. Fluid leaks from where the robot's withering storm of solid slug gunfire savaged his armour plating. It's worst in several medial and inferolateral locations that he doesn't need his retinal display to describe. He can feel the grind of abused metal against – and *inside* – injured flesh, without the aggressive chime of warnings across his visor display.

He can smell his own wounds, smell their coppery openness from a refusal to heal with the expected speed. That isn't a good sign.

'You said there was a ship,' Arkhan Land says without looking back at the warrior.

'A sub-orbital,' Nicanor confirms.

'Already it sounds like some grotesque last gasp for refugees.'

That is exactly what it is, Nicanor thinks. 'The arrangements were made with whatever resources were available.'

'Arranged by whom?' The technoarchaeologist, a wheezing shape of rippling crimson robes, radiates an aura of disapproval. 'By you?'

'First Captain Sigsimund,' Nicanor replies, 'and Fabricator Locum Zagreus Kane.'

Still he doesn't turn, yet Nicanor hears the smirk in Land's tone. 'Fabricator *General* Zagreus Kane now, I'll wager? Ommissiah preserve us from that punishingly dull creature and his limited vision.'

Nicanor casts back a sweat-stinging gaze into the flickering depths of the corridor behind. He sees nothing. No new warning chimes pulse on his retinal feed beyond the ones screaming of his injuries. His auspex scanner remains silent.

Corridor by corridor, they rise through the complex. Nicanor feels his limbs growing leaden as his body assimilates the adrenal sting of the medicae narcotics flooding his system. The strength they granted over the last hours deserts him by increments, inviting back the weary burn of his wounds.

‘I’ve never encountered one of those automata before,’ Nicanor says.

Arkhan Land turns his sharp features back upon his armoured companion. Amusement gleams in the scholar’s half-lidded eyes. ‘A Space Marine with a passion for idle chatter? My, my, my. The surprises never cease.’

Nicanor bridles. ‘I seek answers, not conversation.’

Land gives an unpleasant smile before turning to the tunnel ahead. The psyber-monkey on his shoulder noisily crunches on a steel ingot.

‘It is a Vorax,’ the technoarchaeologist says in an arch tone. ‘This one has been modified by a forge-noble to suit his or her own purposes, I’ve no doubt, but the chassis is that of a Vorax automaton. They rarely see use in the hosts of the Great Crusade anymore. We release them into the forge cities when overpopulation becomes a concern. They are,’ he adds with a refined air, ‘*occasionally* tasked for assassination protocols. But only against targets of sufficiently high priority.’

Nicanor reads the pride in the scholar’s voice. The man’s arrogance knows no bounds.

‘Who would want you dead, Technoarchaeologist Land? The men and women you were keen to remain and face alone?’

The robed man scratches his hairless crown – for no reason Nicanor can discern the psyber-monkey mimics the gesture, scratching its own head. ‘There you’ve asked a question of staggering ignorance, Space Marine. A great many of my contemporaries would enjoy the notion of me breathing my last. Not all, of course. But enough. On both sides of this new war.’

Nicanor grunts at the pain in his side. Land takes it as a question.

‘And why, you ask?’ the technoarchaeologist carries on, though Nicanor has asked no such thing. ‘Because I am *Arkhan Land*. Jealousy motivates them. Jealousy forged in their own insecurities. I suspect that says it all.’

The Imperial Fist says nothing. He’s seen unmodified humans do this before – the propensity that even overconfident souls have for fear-babble in times of duress.

When they emerge at last into the dubious light of the Martian dawn, the Zetek alkali plains stretch out before them.

Nicanor gestures to a rise in the landscape. ‘The ship waits over that ridge.’

It's difficult not to be insulted, really. A single Space Marine.

The Mesatan Complex unlocks and unfolds before them via a series of grinding, whirring doors resembling void-sealed bulkheads – a design choice that Arkhan Land attributes to radiation shielding and disaster containment rather than a consideration of security. Given what's happening across Mars – the insanity so poorly draped in the rags of revolution – he's unsurprised that the complex has been automatically locked down.

'We are being followed,' the Space Marine says at one point.

Land, who has heard nothing at all, gives a tired grunt. The pace is punishing. He has no augmentations. His throat is raw. His legs are burning.

The technoarchaeologist and his companion move swiftly, their boots striking echoes through the empty colonnades. It's a disappointment, to be sure. Despite using the deserted complex as nothing more than a subterranean avenue for the sake of convenience, Land can't help but feel an irritated melancholy at what he's seeing. The emptiness reminds him of the underground mantle-cities he so keenly explores, where his only companions in the Search for Knowledge are the dungeon-slaved defence systems of a forgotten age, and the serenity of his own thoughts.

Will he ever know that peace again?

And how long will the power last here in Mesatan? Without the complex's thrall workers, the air filtration gargoyles mounted within each chamber will cease to breathe sooner rather than later. Anyone still down here within a few days will likely expire from asphyxiation.

And this, Land reflects, would be a truly pointless place to die.

On the run from his own contemporaries, no less. Omnissiah have mercy, it is almost maddening enough to be amusing.

The Imperial Fist leads the way across a bridge stretching over a storage repository, where thousands of crates and containers make up a township below.

A single Space Marine...

Land draws breath to ask why the Imperial Fist is alone, why it was deemed appropriate for a mere lone warrior to defend and escort him... when their pursuer makes itself known.

The Vorax strikes when they're halfway across the span with nowhere to go, its nasty and near-feral cognition aware that they can hardly leap from the high bridge to safety.

The first sign of its presence is when the walkway judders on its support beams, and both Land and the Fist break into a run. Land's frantic stride takes him forward in flight – not for a deluded second does he believe that the machine is here to save him – and the legionary immediately turns back the way they came.

The Imperial Fist is a blur of grinding armour as he passes Land, while the technoarchaeologist is a flapping silhouette of austere robes and simian howling, the latter from Sapien rather than Land himself. Even as he's fleeing for his life, Land feels a tickle of embarrassed dread for believing that they had lost their pursuer for good.

'Get behind me,' the Fist demands.

Land obeys without thinking. The Vorax leans into its awkwardly graceful sprint, its bulbous sensoria-domes locked in a cold, animal glare. Its rotor cannons cycle to life, spear-limbs retracting in something akin to bestial eagerness, ready to launch forth.

The Imperial Fist stands between Land and the automaton. The Space Marine fires first.

Land has never seen the Legiones Astartes fight before. Not outside of visual recordings, with his own eyes. Despite all the ways in which his work has aided – *revolutionised* may not be too strong a word, really – the armouries of the Legions, the warriors themselves and their various capabilities have never particularly interested him, beyond the extent of the Omnissiah's genius in creating them. He studied their physiology insofar as he was able, but a great deal of it was sealed away behind Imperial edict, and much of what he *could* access was bland propaganda.

He left it at that. Frankly, he didn't care.

War, to Arkhan Land, has always been a notion of excruciating boredom.

Land's passion is for how the rediscovered secrets of the past may brighten the future, rather than the tedious brutalities of the present. Space Marines are tools and they fulfil their role with uninspired aplomb.

This one is nevertheless an impressive specimen of the battling art. He opens up with a tremendous crash of bolter-fire, every shot impacting against the Vorax's armour plating, not a single shell going wide. All the while he backs away, keeping his bulk between the machine and its kill-target, twitching and buckling under the rattling slug-fire from its rotor cannons and yet refusing to fall.

Sparks fly from the Imperial Fist's armour. Scraps of ceramite clatter in steaming shards to the walkway gantry. He is being drilled. No other words sum up the destruction inflicted upon the towering warrior. He is being drilled by

gunfire.

Bullets whine and buzz past where Land cowers in the warrior's shadow. They spank and clang off the walkway's railings, inches from where he stands.

Still the boltgun booms.

'Nicanor—' Land says. It is the first and last time he will speak the Imperial Fist's name.

Nicanor fires one-handed, grunting as his blood mists in the air. His free gauntlet reaches for the melta bomb bound to his back.

'Run,' the Space Marine orders, and pulls the device.

'That will not—'

'For the bridge.' Nicanor keeps his armoured pauldron facing the advancing, reloading foe, with his helmet half-masked behind it. 'Not for the machine. Run.'

He's going to blow the br—

Land runs.

2

'You are the technoarchaeologist Arkhan Land,' says Nicanor.

It isn't a question. The man he addresses is slight of build, sparse of hair, wears multilens wide-spectrum visualiser goggles lifted high up on his forehead, is clad in the layered robes of a senior adept over the more practical travelling bodysuit and rugged armour of a mendicant Martian, and is in the company of an artificimian – a psyber-monkey – that watches Nicanor with clicking picter-eyes.

Additionally, the man's facial features exactly resemble the image files that Nicanor has stored in his retinal display. This is unquestionably Arkhan Land.

Nicanor can see that the man is afraid, betrayed by an accelerated heart rate and the sheen of fear-sweat on his brow. But there is pride here; Arkhan Land may be a non-combatant and in fear for his life – and, indeed, his entire way of life – but he stands tall and defiant even with a tremble in his limbs.

This is good, Nicanor thinks in his dispassionately amused way. It is good to admire someone that you may have to die for.

'I am he,' the sharp-eyed human replies. 'And, dare I ask, which side you are on, Space Marine?'

Nicanor stiffens at the insult of the man's words, though given the circumstances they are understandable enough. 'I am Sergeant Nicanor Tullus of the Seventh Legion.'

Land sneers, rejecting the answer. 'That tells me nothing but your name and

your lineage, Space Marine.'

'I am loyal to the Emperor.'

At that, the technoarchaeologist exhales something between a sigh of relief and a breath of irritation. 'I trust you are here to "save" me, then. Well, I commend you for your efforts in locating me, but those efforts have been in vain. I am not leaving my home world. Sacred Mars is aflame with heathenism, true enough, but it is my home.'

Nicanor expected this. He commits precious seconds looking around the laboratory, seeking any sign of weaponry capable of causing him harm. There appears to be precious little in the way of threat amongst the near-preternatural degrees of clutter. Arkhan Land is hailed as a genius, but if his mind is as disordered as the space he inhabits, then it is a chaotic genius indeed that resides behind those unhappy features.

'My brethren are assisting in the defence and evacuation of the Mondus Occulum forge. I was assigned—'

Land barks a laugh, speaking over Nicanor's declaration. 'Oh, noble legionaries! Come to save their precious armour-foundries and plunder what they can, before leaving the Forge World Principal to burn, eh?'

'I refuse to argue with you, Technoarchaeologist Land. A ship waits, hidden on the Zetek tundra. Stealth and caution are advised, and thus you will take no skimmer craft. You will make your way to Zetek via the Mesatan gearworks complex, and you will board the transport. From there you will be taken to the Ring of Iron, and onward to Terra.'

Land bares his teeth. It isn't a smile, this time. Not even a mocking one. 'I cannot leave my work unattended, Space Marine.'

The psyber-monkey hangs from a series of bars set across the laboratory's ceiling. They seem specifically constructed for the purpose. As the warrior and the scholar talk, the artificimian swings its way across the room and drops to land on its master's shoulder.

'If you remain here,' Nicanor says, 'there is a chance you will be executed by the foe. Assassins may already be on their way.'

'The Ommissiah will protect me,' Land replies, piously and sincerely making the Sign of the Cog with his linked knuckles.

'The Emperor's own Regent sent my Legion here, Arkhan Land. Perhaps *we* are the protection you speak of and pray for.'

'Meta-spiritual philosophising from a ceramite-clad brute? As if the rebellion raging across this world wasn't enough of a surprise for one lifetime! No, you

Terran bastard, I am not leaving.’

Impassive to the man’s resistance, Nicanor tries one last time. ‘There is also a significant chance that if you are not executed by the Fabricator General’s traitorous forces, you will be captured by them.’

Something – some emotion that Nicanor is incapable of reading – flashes in the scholar’s eyes. ‘That is a distinct possibility,’ he agrees.

‘And you understand,’ the warrior presses on with inhuman calm, ‘that such an event cannot be allowed to transpire.’

‘Ah.’ Land snorts in simple disgust. ‘I know too much, eh? Can’t risk me defecting. Is that it?’

Nicanor says nothing. He draws his boltgun and levels it at Arkhan Land’s head.

1

‘He must live,’ says Sigismund.

Nicanor listens to the words, words that are really an order. His raised face – and the face of every warrior present – is bathed in the flickering light of the tactical hololith. The images revolve through the air above the projection table, locked in a slow ballet of rotating illumination.

They will make planetfall in an hour. They already know everything there is to know. All that remains is to allocate landing zones, to choose which warriors will go where.

One side of the briefing display is given over to data relating to Arkhan Land.

The Arkhan Land. The explorer and scholar responsible for so many expeditions into the ancient data-crypts of Mars’ crust and mantle. The man that brought back the beginnings of anti-grav technology to the nascent Imperium; the man responsible for unearthing and sharing the schematics that led to the mass-production of the Raiders and Speeders now seen in their thousands among the Legions.

Land Raiders. Land Speeders. The war machines are even named for him, now.

The stern, cold-eyed gaze of the Legion’s First Captain falls upon Nicanor. He feels Sigismund’s stare before he sees it, and when he meets his marshal’s eyes, he can do nothing but nod.

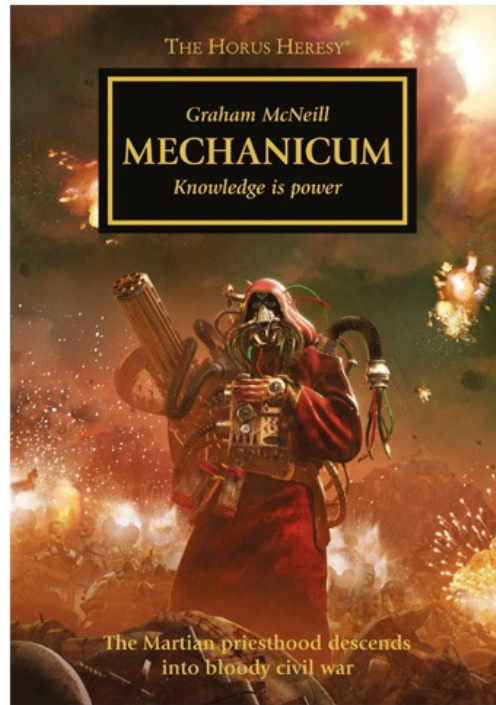
‘He must live,’ Sigismund repeats.

Nicanor nods once. ‘And he will.’

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aaron Dembski-Bowden is the author of the Horus Heresy novels *Betrayer* and *The First Heretic*, as well as the novella *Aurelian* and the audio drama *Butcher's Nails*, for the same series. He also wrote the popular Night Lords series, the Space Marine Battles book *Helsreach*, the Abaddon novel *The Talon of Horus*, the Grey Knights novel *The Emperor's Gift* and numerous short stories. He lives and works in Northern Ireland.

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