



OUR MARTYRED LADY

1. Troublesome priests
2. Conspiracy Theories
3. Faith Endures
4. The Sternest Test

OUR MARTYRED LADY - TROUBLESOME PRIESTS (2019)

Written by Gav Thorpe

Performed by Catherine Tate, Emma Gregory, David Sibley, Richard Reed,
Andrew Fettes, Ramon Tikaram, Cliff Chapman, Melvin Rawlinson,
and Matthew Hunt

Scripted by Reverend

LIST OF CHARACTERS:

- * Celestine, the Living Saint
- * Inquisitor Katarinya Greyfax
- * Ecclesiarch Deacis
- * Custodian Longinus
- * Spy Kyrillos
- * Lord Inquisitor Trevayne
- * Assistant Aestus
- * Inquisitor Lock
- * Navigator Elixio
- * Trooper Athanaseos Timmos
- * Arbitrator Meshel

Numerous Guardsmen (marching during the parade): “For the Emperor!”
(crowd chanting)
(heavy wind)

Celestine (unsheathing her blade): “Fear not, sons and daughters of the Emperor’s light! Before you comes a horde of darkness, a tide of greenskin xenos that would befoul this world with their taint. Yet behind you stand ten thousand of your brothers and sisters. And I, Celestine, will fight with you, the ever living proof of the Emperor’s glorious strength.

Numerous Guardsmen (cheering): “YEAH!”

Celestine: “Look hence to the spire of the basilica of Saint Catherine in whose honor this world has become a shrine. On these sacred grounds trod one who stood before the Golden Throne and laid eyes upon the glorious countenance¹ of the Master of Mankind. Feel her spirit here moving through you, filling your hearts with her courage just as the Emperor filled her heart with his eternal grace. Brothers and sisters in arms of the Imperial Guard, you have been called upon to fight for this world in the name of the Emperor. Think of it not as some land war for which you give your blood, but the flesh of the Imperium, the domain of the Emperor on Terra. By his divine will you have been lifted from

your homes and carried across the endless void seas to fight for him. Lift up your hearts even as you lift your weapons! Strike down these unholy abominations of the utter darkness with purity in your souls. Suffer not the alien to live!”

Numerous Guardsmen (cheering): “YEEEEAH!”

Celestine: “Show these brutes² no mercy for they deserve nothing but your undying scorn³. See their filthy mechanical idols raised to false gods and know that they defile⁴ the memories of all that came before you. If you cherish anything, strike with hatred and purpose and cleanse this world! (screaming) For the Emperor!”

Numerous Guardsmen (cheering): “For the Emperor! YEEEEAH!”

(Imperial Guard and Celestine clashing with the orkish tide in melee)
(thunder roaring overhead)

(clairvoyant vision coming before Celestine’s eyes)

Emperor of Mankind (menacing): “Celestine... Heed my words... Our doom cometh near...”

(Celestine trembling in horror, breathing hard)

Timmos: “Our lady of hope, what ails you?”

Emperor of Mankind (still heard): “DOOM! DOOM!”

Celestine: “I... the battle is won?”

Timmos: “Not yet, revered lady, but their greatest engines are broken and with the Emperor’s blessing it will be over soon. Are you hurt?”

Celestine: “No! I saw something terrible, a coming disaster”.

Timmos: “Here, revered lady?”

Celestine: “No! I saw the Throne world burning, the statues of a thousand saints toppled⁵”.

Timmos: “Emperor, save us!”

Celestine (breathing hard): “What is your name?”

Timmos: “Timmos, trooper Athanaseos Timmos, my revered lady”.

Celestine: “Do not allow doubt into your heart, trooper Athanaseos Timmos. Trust in the Emperor and your sacrifices shall not go unseen by his eye. I have seen an ill omen, but it is a warning from the Emperor, not a prophecy of what will come to pass”.

Timmos: “Then I will give prayer to the Emperor, revered lady, for your protection and strength”.

Celestine: “And he shall guide you to your purpose, Timmos, as he has led me to mine”.

* * *

(several heretics trying to escape through the city)

Heretic (running and breathing hard): “Keep going! We are nearly there!”

(weird noises behind)

Heretic (running): "Don't look back, keep running!"

Greyfax (to running figures): "Halt in the name of the Emperor! By order of the Inquisition stop immediately or face summary⁶ execution".

Greyfax (over vox): "Arbitrator Meshel, this is Greyfax. I need immediate interdiction⁷ support, three heretics, sub city three, heading towards the Angel bridge dock works".

(interference in the vox)

Greyfax: "Throne! Too much interference. Activate vox record personal archive. Archive recording of Inquisitor Katarinya Greyfax, auto-transmit. My investigation has brought me into sublevels of Archanos hive on Gallant Five. I am pursuing three heretics of interest, terminal workers at the Angel bridge docks. I have yet to ascertain⁸ what they have smuggled⁹ through the security cordon and to which ship they have moved it to.

(Greyfax turning on the vox)

Greyfax (over vox): "Arbitrator Meshel, can you hear me? Interdiction needed at lowest approach to Angel bridge".

(interference in the vox)

Greyfax (treading forwards): "Archiving continued. Fourteen shuttle craft and three heavy loaders are due to leave in the next few hours. I cannot assume that the target vessel is listed on the normal launch schedules. It is imperative that I retain..."

(gunshot preventing Greyfax from finishing)

Greyfax (over vox): "Oh! Under fire, where are you, Meshel?"

(Greyfax under heavy fire)

Greyfax: "I have underestimated the scale of the conspiracy. At least a dozen heretics are holding this supply gate into Angel bridge, elevated and flank positions. I have cover for the moment, but principal targets will escape shortly if I cannot break through".

(Greyfax under numerous volleys of gunfire)

Greyfax: "Huh, let us see if they resist a voice of authority".

(Greyfax using psyker abilities)

Greyfax: "I am an Inquisitor of the Emperor. Resistance is heresy, cease fire and prepare for judgment".

(gunfire remaining tense)

Greyfax: "Ill-minded traitors..."

(explosion, Imperial reinforcements arriving)

Meshel (over vox): "Inquisitor Greyfax, Meshel here. Sorry for the delay, we could receive, but not transmit".

Greyfax (over vox): "I need one of those heretics alive".

Meshel (over vox): "They'll never talk".

Greyfax (using her psyker abilities): "I have my methods".

Heretic: "Get... out... of... my... head... witch".

(Greyfax approaching and grasping one of the heretics)

Greyfax: "Don't move. Which ship?"

(Heretic grunting)

Greyfax: "What were you smuggling? Where is it going?"

Heretic: "You'll never know, slave of the false emperor".

(Greyfax hitting the heretic hard)

Greyfax (menacing): "You are not dead yet, heretic! I can make your passing a lot more painful".

Heretic (moaning): "Too... late..."

Greyfax (using her psyker abilities): "Not for me!"

Heretic (moaning): "I... am... the righteous... Death is my release. I shall not fear..."

Greyfax (using her psyker abilities): "Where?"

Heretic (moaning): "You will never stop him reaching the Throne world".

(heretic suffocating to death)

Greyfax (over vox): "Arbitrator Meshel, I need details of every ship bound for Terra that has departed in the last day".

Meshel (over vox): "I can tell you that myself. None. All Segmentum Solar bound ships transit through Piraeus. Before you ask, about three quarters of all traffic from this system travels via Piraeus".

Greyfax (over vox): "So the trail dies here unless we can stop those ships".

Meshel (over vox): "We don't have the facilities or resources to enforce a travel embargo".

Greyfax (over vox): "Fine, in that case I have only one option, Meshel. Find me a place on the next ship bound for Piraeus. I need to return to Terra".

(vox transmission off)

* * *

(Greyfax writing something)

(someone knocking on the door)

(Greyfax keeps writing, paying no attention)

(four anxious insistent knocks on the door)

Greyfax: "Just come in, Aestus!"

Aestus (entering): "You have a visitor, Inquisitor Greyfax".

Greyfax: "So I surmised¹⁰ from your interruption. I am preparing my findings from Gallant Five for the conclave¹¹. Have Lock deal with it".

Aestus: "It is Kyrillos, Inquisitor. He wishes to speak with you".

Greyfax: "Very well, send him in".

(Aestus leaving to welcome the guest)

(Kyrillos entering the room and approaching slowly)

Kyrillos: "Inquisitor..."

Greyfax (interrupting): "Close the door!"

(Kyrillos closing the door)

Greyfax: "Sit down. I despise your hovering¹² like a hiveless bee".

Kyrillos: "Bee, Inquisitor?"

Greyfax: "A pollinating¹³ insect found on some pre-dark age worlds. I am surprised you haven't heard of them".

Kyrillos: "My cerebral¹⁴ shard contains every entry in the Ecclesiarchal library, Inquisitor, but I find no reference to bees, I am afraid. There are 13 Saint Beatrices, the Emperor's worshiped in the guise of the giant dung beetle¹⁵ in the Teptic sector, but..."

Greyfax (interrupting): "What are you here to tell me?"

Kyrillos: "Sorry, Inquisitor. I've acquired a portion of the address that the Ecclesiarch plans to make at the feast of the Emperor's ascension in seventeen days' time. He's tended it to the senate of cardinals for their approval".

Greyfax: "Of passing interest, but hardly a revelation worthy of this distraction".

Kyrillos: "If I can interface with your auto-scribe, Inquisitor, I'll share with you certain passages that will concern you".

Greyfax: "I shall be the judge of that. The auto-scribe is over there".

(Kyrillos going to the auto-scribe, connecting his interface)

(auto-scribe printing the speech)

(Kyrillos tearing the leaf from the printing device and bringing to Greyfax)

Kyrillos: "Here you are, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "Gathering storm of fires... benighted¹⁶ dioceses¹⁷ across the Imperium calling for sucker... the artifice¹⁸ of the Emperor raw tenure¹⁹... Terrifying prospect of annihilation... The Battle Sisters of the Adeptus Sorrowitas are exemplars of the Emperor's most faithful warriors... but woefully outnumbered by the alien, heretic and mutant. Hm..."

Kyrillos: "This next part, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "Findet my Adeptus Ministorum gladly carries the burden of protecting the faith and souls of the Emperor's servants; it is concomitant²⁰ to that duty to protect also the body. Is this leading where I think it is?"

Kyrillos: "Read on, Inquisitor".

Greyfax (clearing her throat): "For too long the arm of the Ecclesiarchy has reached short in its labor due to ancient worries. Ha! Curtailing²¹ the substance of our assistance to the faithful out of the fear of corruption. I see..."

Kyrillos: "Please continue, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "We no longer possess the luxury of such delicacy in our dealings with the rude universe and so the great resources of the mighty church of the Imperium of which we are so justly proud must be moved to better employment. Luxury, he says..."

Kyrillos: "The next part, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "Therefore I, Ecclesiarch Deacis the 23rd, with the authority of the Holy Synod shall be revoking²² the terms of the Decree Passive effective immediately upon ratification by the Synod Ministra on... (shocked) He must be insane!"

Kyrillos: "I hope that is of some interest, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "You can stop looking so pleased with yourself! Why are only now telling me of this? I raised you up from the hive scum of your people, educated you in the ways of espionage and deduction, placed you as an arch-deacon in the very bosom²³ of the Adeptus Ministorum and you bring me this just seventeen days before he's due to make the speech?"

Kyrillos: "I was, Inquisitor! I was only privy²⁴ to the contents..."

Greyfax (interrupting): "Ecclesiarchs do not suddenly decide to raise a personal army on a whim²⁵, Kyrillos! He has the support of the Holy Synod and he's made enquiries with the Synod Ministra on Ophelia VII. This is the culmination of a plan, not the start".

Kyrillos (mumbling): "But I..."

Greyfax (interrupting): "No excuses, I want names, dates, places. Who is involved and what do they intend? Is Deacis the instigator or a puppet, have moves been taken to start assembling the Frateris Templars? Is he planning to travel to Ophelia?"

Kyrillos: "Yes, Inquisitor. I will return to the Ecclesiarchal Palace immediately, Inquisitor. I will have a full report within three days".

Greyfax: "Two!"

Kyrillos: "Two days, Inquisitor".

(Inquisitor keeping silence for a pause)

Greyfax: "Why are you still here?"

(Kyrillos mumbling and leaving the room, closing the door)

Greyfax: "Damn those troublesome priests and their schemes".

* * *

(Katarinya treading in a rush)

Lock (trying to catch up with the Inquisitor): "Katarinya, a moment of your time!"

Greyfax: "I am due to deposition²⁶ the conclave on my activities at Gallant Five, Inquisitor Lock".

Lock (breathing hard): "Except, I know that you are not, Katarinya. You passed your report to Loysheh and recused²⁷ yourself from the conclave".

Greyfax: "Why would I do that, Lock?"

Lock: "I know what Deacis is planning, just stop!"

Greyfax (continuing to walk): "No, I am busy".

Lock: "Do you really want me to shout it out? Here, where everyone is listening? Fine, Lord Inquisitor Trevayne has contacted the Grandmaster of the Officio Assassinorum regarding the Decree Passive issue".

Greyfax (stopping, angrily): "What?"

Lock: "I heard from a very good source that lord Trevayne, our current representative to the Senatorum Imperialis has commissioned an agent of the Officio Assassinorum to forestall²⁸ any potential problems with Deacis the 23rd".

Greyfax: "With approval from the High Lords?"

Lock: "I think not, Katarinya. I made discreet²⁹ inquiries with several other inquisitors with interests in other organizations and they have seen nothing to suggest the matter has even been raised at Council".

Greyfax: "If Deacis is assassinated, it could tear the Ecclesiarchy apart. It would be every bit as divisive³⁰ as what he is proposing. We are already so sorely³¹ tested on every front, a schism³² within the Imperial church could prove very costly. I'll deal with this".

Lock: "What are we going to do?"

Greyfax: "You are going to forget this conversation, Inquisitor Lock. As for what I am going to do, that is my business alone".

(Greyfax leaving Lock)

* * *

Timmos: "We have touched down, revered lady".

(hatch opening, Saint Celestine going out of the pod)

(crowd chanting hymns in amazement and awe)

Celestine (walking out of the pod): "I see I am expected".

Cardinal: "Oh, praise the Emperor, it is true. We are so blessed by your presence, Saint Celestine! The Ecclesiarch has commanded a full humalia in your honor"

Celestine: "Thank you, cardinal! There are so many of you".

Cardinal: "Nearly all of the Synod, revered lady, those well enough to travel. That is a rare occasion when a Living Saint arrives to join us in the feast of the Emperor's ascension".

Celestine: "I have not come to..."

Cardinal (interrupting): "We feared you would not arrive in time of course. There are only two days until the main address. The Ecclesiarch is continuing his preparations, otherwise he would have greeted you himself".

Celestine: "I must speak..."

Cardinal (interrupting): "Of course, revered lady. The Synod will be delighted to grant audience. We have created a special area within the shrine of Dominica so that you could attend upon them".

Celestine (firmly): "No, I must see the Ecclesiarch! Now!"

Cardinal: "I am terribly sorry, revered lady, but that is impossible. He is due to attend the first station of the Emperor's sacrificial enlar. Perhaps, tomorrow?"
(crowd chanting religious anthems)

* * *

(Greyfax rapidly approaching Lord Inquisitor)

Trevayne (sitting in his armchair): "Katarinya Greyfax, rare occasion when one of our best comes to my chambers".

Greyfax: "It is exceptional circumstance that brings me, Lord Trevayne".

Trevayne (sighing and pouring amasec in his glass): "Amasec? Martian vodka?"

Greyfax: "Water, if you have some".

Trevayne (opening a bottle): "The Decree Passive matter, that's why you are here".

Greyfax: "You are well informed".

Trevayne (pouring his drink in a glass): "I am a Lord Inquisitor. I exist to be well-informed. Lock is more conspicuous³³ than he thinks".

Greyfax: "Do you deny contact with Grandmaster Saba?"

Trevayne: "Are you interrogating me, Greyfax?"

Greyfax: "I am an Inquisitor. None are above my scrutiny³⁴".

Trevayne (smiling): "Hehehe! Yes, you actually believe that. I am not concerned by your judgments so it doesn't matter if I confirm your suspicions. Yes, it's true. I deemed Ecclesiarch Deacis a threat to the stability of the Imperium and sanctioned the Officio Assassinorum to remove him. Can I interest you in a sniff of ghost dust?"

Greyfax: "I am not aware of it".

Trevayne: "It comes from Necromunda, an uphive version of the combat stimulant known as Spook. Just enough to let the synapses fire a little faster. Maybe some fervor instead? Or I have some admilladox in a drawer here somewhere".

Greyfax: "Are there any vices³⁵ in which you do not indulge³⁶?"

Trevayne (taking a sniff of ghost dust): "Only self-righteousness³⁷, do you have any vices at all?"

Greyfax: "Stop dissembling³⁸. You appointed an assassin on your own authority, not a vote of the Senatorum Imperialis".

Trevayne: "Deacis is a High Lord. It would be stupid to allow the target of an assassination to know about it. Never mind allowing him to vote on the matter".

Greyfax: "Even so you sought no support from the others? You are our voice on the highest council in the Imperium, a position that comes with responsibilities".

Trevayne (taking a sip of amasec and putting the glass on the table): "It's just a hat I sometimes wear, Greyfax, nothing more. If you demanded an audience with the High Lords tomorrow, you would be the inquisitorial representative instead. I am still an Inquisitor and my duty is clear".

Greyfax: "I have misgivings³⁹".

Trevayne: "Good for you, I do not".

Greyfax: "Regardless I am going to share them with you, Lord Inquisitor".

(Trevayne sighing)

Greyfax: "At first pass I thought the same as you. The Decree Passive was put in place to ensure that no Ecclesiarch wielded the kind of power that corrupted Goge Vandire".

Trevayne: "Being spiritual leader of the Emperor's church is power enough, without adding the ability to raise armies".

Greyfax: "It is a loosely stitch patch on an ancient tear and you know it. The Decree Passive prevents the Adeptus Ministorum from raising men under arms. It has been applied literally for 4,000 years, banning them from recreating the Frateris Templars, but leaving them free to deploy Orders Militant of the Battle Sisters. You must admit that the Sisters of Battle have been a useful force for the Imperium in these dark times".

Trevayne (fidgeting on an armchair and pouring another glass of amasec): "I have to admit nothing, but feel free to continue".

Greyfax: "Four thousand years the Decree Passive has been held as an open lie. Perhaps, it is time we should accept that it never worked as intended".

Trevayne: "You want me to suggest to the High Lords that the Decree Passive is extended to the Adepta Sorrowitas? Hehe, we should outlaw the Battle Sisters?"

Greyfax: "Do not be obtuse⁴⁰, Lord Trevayne. Do we even have the authority to stop the Ecclesiarch from rescinding⁴¹ the Decree Passive?"

Trevayne: "Our power is absolute and immediate".

Greyfax: "Even so the Decree Passive is an Ecclesiarchal writ⁴², not Imperial law. It was underwritten by Sebastian Thor as a promise that he would not go down the same root as his megalomaniac⁴³ predecessor, adopted within the

Adeptus Ministorum. If Deacis wants to change Ecclesiarchal law, can we stop him?"

Trevayne (smiling): "Heh, I find a bullet solves most disputes".

(Trevayne taking another sniff of ghost dust)

Trevayne: "You've walked a purist's path the most of your career, Greyfax. But since Cadia I think you've come to know the shadows a bit better".

Greyfax: "I resent any..."

Trevayne (interrupting): "Those that follow our calling know that we don't deal in legality, only morality".

Greyfax (squirming): "Ha!"

Trevayne: "I defend the Emperor's domains, not the laws passed by lesser servants in his name".

Greyfax: "The Imperium cannot survive more division. I know your background, Trevayne, associations with the recongregators when you were inducted into the Ordo Hereticus".

Trevayne (taking another sip): "And what of it?"

Greyfax: "Sometime you have to break something to fix it. That is their central tenet⁴⁴, is it not? The pieces can be assembled into something new. You must look on the wars raging across our worlds and see a fine opportunity to cleanse the old politics and bring in... What? What would you replace this with exactly?"

Trevayne: "But my past is of no importance".

Greyfax: "I am sure that will be a good defense when I call a conclave to investigate your actions, Lord Trevayne".

Trevayne: "You can't bring attention to the Inquisition's part in this matter. It will pour oil on a fire".

Greyfax: "It is not the Inquisition that lit the fire. It is you, a single Inquisitor".

Trevayne (knocking on the elbow-rest): "That is what we are. Each of us are law unto ourselves guided by our beliefs and morality to protect the Emperor's legacy".

Greyfax: "Yet still accountable to each other, Lord Inquisitor Trevayne. If you do not have the courage to defend your actions before the judgment of your peers⁴⁵, perhaps, you need to think harder on them".

Trevayne: "This is a liberty too far, Greyfax. Perhaps, a conclave should consider your actions of late. I think your time with the Living Saint has blinded you to the corruption growing within the Imperial church".

Greyfax: "I have little enough time for Celestine and her ilk⁴⁶. I am a witch hunter, an agent of the Ordo Hereticus. We have seen the true nature of the universe, where power really lies and it is not in the hollow prayers and vacuous⁴⁷ sermons⁴⁸ of the Ecclesiarchy. We live in unprecedented times,

Lord Inquisitor. The Inquisition cannot afford disunity any more than the Adeptus Ministorum. Each of us is being tested in ways we never expected every day that we face the resurging⁴⁹ darkness”.

Trevayne: “Some of us...”

Greyfax (interrupting): “Look at where we are now. Half of the Imperium is lost behind the greatest warp storm of the last ten thousand years, blinded to the light of the Emperor’s beacon. Daily worlds are lost to the warp, swallowed by demonic powers that threaten everything we try to protect”.

Trevayne: “It was you...”

Greyfax (interrupting): “The Lord Commander of our armies beyond that veil is a Primarch, an inhuman super-being created by the Emperor ten thousand years ago, brought back from death by xenos magic we cannot comprehend. You will understand if I think that the Ecclesiarchy wanting to have armies again is not our greatest concern at this time”.

Trevayne: “And what would you have me do?”

Greyfax: “Nothing, perhaps we should let them. They might even win a few battles”.

Trevayne: “You are going to fight me on this?”

Greyfax: “My investigation into Deacis’s behavior will continue. I do not prejudge⁵⁰ the outcome. What you do is your concern”.

Trevayne (knocking his fingers on the glass impatiently): “I suppose I should be thankful that you came to me with your misgivings, rather than taking other action”.

Greyfax: “I did consider bringing my bolter and putting a blessed round to free your brain”.

Trevayne (smiling): “Ehehe, what made you reconsider?”

Greyfax: “The assassination order is already given. Only you can rescind it. Even though I have seen remarkable sights these last decades, I do not believe that you’ll be able to do that from beyond the grave”.

Trevayne: “That was the only thing that stopped you from performing summary execution?”

Greyfax (after a pause): “Call off the assassin, Lord Inquisitor, and allow me to deal with Deacis in other way”.

Trevayne: “Maybe, I will give it more thought, I promise”.

Greyfax: “Then I shall leave you to the administrative burdens of your position, Inquisitorial representative”.

(Greyfax leaving the room)

* * *

(crowd chanting religious hymns)

Kyrillos: "It's impressive, isn't it? The Synod and faithful gathered for the highest feast of the church calendar. On this day more than ten thousand years ago the Emperor ascended from the mortal sphere to the heavens becoming our God Emperor"

Greyfax: "Is this what one might call the holy sea? A tide of so many faithful? Looking down on them like this I understand why you call the addressees 'mass'".

Kyrillos: "There are about 72,000 pilgrims within the central nave and another 130,000 in the outer stalls⁵¹, 2468 of the Synod cardinals on the attendance, 3 of whom only in body due to ongoing stasis-induced treatments for various ailments. In the cloisters⁵² and avenues outside wait 14 million more pilgrims".

Greyfax: "Fascinating".

Kyrillos: "It is estimated that 2.4 billion pilgrims are in transit to or from Terra in any given moment".

Greyfax: "And Deacis would happily give them all guns and armor?"

Kyrillos: "I thought you were agreeing with him now?"

Greyfax: "There's a broad gulf⁵³ between not wishing the leader of the Ecclesiarchy assassinated and agreeing with his stats that Imperial church are returned commanding regiments of heavily armed Frateris Templars".

Kyrillos: "What exactly you hope to see from up here where 822 meters above the nave floor? I can barely see faces, much less than any weapon".

Greyfax: "I am not looking for anything. I am attuning⁵⁴ myself to the background psychic field. Do you I could just pluck⁵⁵ the mind of an assassin from this morass⁵⁶ of forced piety⁵⁷ and random emotional detritus⁵⁸?"

Kyrillos: "So why are we all the way up here?"

Greyfax: "So I can get away from the clutter of so many minds. I wish I decided to dispense with⁵⁹ the presence of one more".

Kyrillos: "Inquisitor?"

Greyfax: "Yes?"

Kyrillos: "Look at the cardinals, a new arrival".

Greyfax: "Celestine..."

Kyrillos: "She arrived two days ago seeking audience with the Ecclesiarch. Perhaps, she is involved with this conspiracy".

Greyfax (angrily): "Two days ago? Why am I only learning this now?"

Kyrillos: "Doesn't she look magnificent? That golden armor like the plate of the God Emperor himself".

Greyfax: "Shut up, Kyrillos! Let me concentrate!"

* * *

Kyrillos: "The Ecclesiarch's speech will be starting in thirteen minutes, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "Yes, yes, and then he will send to that lectern over there in plain sight of the whole congregation".

Kyrillos: "It's quite so. The pulpit⁶⁰ grandiose contains a displacement field generator as well as the armored glasteel screen you can see".

Greyfax: "I see the assassin knows it as well. Now be quiet".

(Greyfax using her psyker abilities to find the assassin in the crowd)

Ceremony Attendant 1: "Living saint looks ever... I wish that the light of the Emperor shone from me".

Ceremony Attendant 2: "Majestic in Excelsis is one of my favorites. I repel, when preacher Donovan..."

Ceremony Attendant 3: "But even so that lives me the support from nearly two thirds of the Synod. If Deacis doesn't elevate me to cardinal superior, I'll move...."

Ceremony Attendant 4: "Deliver us from void clutch! And, dear Emperor, if you can see your right of Vexus Primus Darrell, I'd appreciate it. He says the land on the south wall belongs to him. But my grandfather worked those fields until he died. I don't ask for anything nasty, just a crutch⁶¹..."

Alpha Psyker: "The false prophet will soon be destroyed. The ever burning flame will consume these heretics and from their ashes shall be reborn the many-tailed lord of creation".

Greyfax: "Oh!"

Kyrillos: "Are you all right, Inquisitor?"

Greyfax: "Silence!"

Alpha Psyker: "By my hand the will of the eight-turned god shall... Upon this pyre I will be elevated to... Come on you filthy traitor, your judgment... Bless this rubric and those that died to create it".

Greyfax (spotting the enemy): "Down there! One of the pilgrims!"

Kyrillos: "Which one?"

Greyfax: "I cannot pinpoint the source, near that statue the one with a cup of blood and the crown of barbs".

Kyrillos: "That would be the second saint Arthur of Alastos, one of the Missionaria Galaxia. He died bringing word to the lost worlds of the Southern Rim. The first Saint Arthur was..."

Greyfax (interrupting): "MOVE!!!"

* * *

(Greyfax and Kyrillos running through the crowd after the assassin)

Greyfax (on the run): "Clear a path! By order of the Inquisition! Make way! Stand aside for the Inquisition!"

Kyrillos (on the run): "I can't see him, Inquisitor. Where's he gone?"

(Greyfax using her psyker abilities)

Alpha Psyker: "I am the burning vengeance of a hated few. By the power of the eight-turned god I will not sin. By the might of the eight-turned god I shall strike down the unholy".

Greyfax (on the run): "This way!"

Kyrillos (on the run): "There are too many people, Inquisitor".

(trumpets chanting)

Kyrillos (on the run): "The Ecclesiarch enters, hurry!"

Greyfax (on the run): "Throne, I cannot reach the assassin! We must take a different course of action".

* * *

Ecclesiarchy Clergyman: "Revered lady, the most revered Ecclesiarch will be speaking shortly. When I indicate it is time, you shall ascend and bathe the congregation in holy light of your blessing".

Celestine: "Ascend? Where?"

Ecclesiarchy Clergyman: "Hm, up, revered lady! You know, born aloft by your wings of the Emperor's lifting benevolence⁶²"

Celestine: "My manifestations of the Emperor's power come upon me in battle when I fight in his name. They are not tricks with which the Ecclesiarch should seek to bedazzle⁶³ impressionable pilgrims".

Ecclesiarchy Clergyman: "I see... Could you perhaps ecleem a little, revered lady? Flames along the sword of saint..."

(distant gunfire interrupting)

Celestine: "Gunfire!"

Ecclesiarchy Clergyman: "Emperor, protect us!"

Celestine: "There, down in the commoners' pews⁶⁴".

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "Saint Celestine, it is Inquisitor Greyfax".

Celestine: "Katarinya, are you here?!"

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "I am the one shooting. There is an assassin but he is too far away for me to hit. I am hoping he will get crushed in the stampede⁶⁵".

Celestine: "Where? One of the pilgrims?"

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "Celestine, I need you to protect Deacis. Get the Ecclesiarch to safety".

Celestine: "I understand, it shall be done".

(Celestine spreading her wings and flying over the heads of the astonished crowd)

One of the pilgrims: "Save us, revered lady!"

Celestine: "My Lord Ecclesiarch, beware!"

Deacis: "Saint Celestine!"

(Celestine gripping Deacis and flying away)

Deacis: "Oh praise the Emperor!"

Celestine: "Hold on tight, Lord Ecclesiarch!"

Deacis (moaning): "Oh... Eh... Where are you taking me?"

Celestine: "There is an Inquisitor, my lord. I shall... "

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "Not to me, Celestine... Take him to safety!"

Celestine: "The main doors are filled with fleeing cardinals. I have an idea. Cover your head, my lord".

Deacis: "Eh... Celestine, what are you doing?"

(Celestine breaking the glass and leaving the cathedral)

Deacis (scared): "Eh.... Oh...."

Celestine: "Do not fear, Lord Ecclesiarch! The Emperor protects".

* * *

Kyrillos (breathing hard): "The Ecclesiarch is safe. We should get out of here as well, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "Not yet! Oh, oh... The assassin is still on the loose. I feel something is growing stronger, a thought, a singular purpose".

Alpha Psyker: "The false worshippers shall be punished. The eight-turned god shall rise triumphant still".

Greyfax (breathing hard): "We need to leave".

Kyrillos: "What is it, Inquisitor?"

Greyfax (on the run): "Go! A psychic resonance, something terrible is about to occur".

Kyrillos (on the run): "Shouldn't we..."

Greyfax (on the run): "RUN!"

* * *

(Celestine and Deacis flying away from the cathedral)

Deacis (breathing hard): "Oh... Oh... I... I... I think we are far enough away now".

Celestine: "Yes! Yes, of course, Lord Ecclesiarch! I shall take you..."

Deacis (interrupting): "Oh, wait! What is that light? There within the windows of the cathedral of Saint Thor? "

Celestine: "Pale blue like a plasma blast, perhaps".

Deacis: "It is still growing brighter! Oh, Emperor's mercy!!!"

Celestine: "Shield your eyes!"

(cathedral exploding and collapsing)

Celestine (shocked, breathing hard): "It is gone, the whole cathedral destroyed".

Deacis: "Eh... Oh... What do you mean? (shocked) Oh... Oh... Impossible!"

Celestine: "The cathedral of Saint Thor, nothing left but rubble and ash!"

Deacis: "What of the Synod of Terra? The pilgrims? I see nothing moving".

Celestine: "Dead. Perhaps a few were able to flee the cathedral first".

Deacis: "Who would do this? Tens of thousands slain, why?"

Celestine: "I cannot answer that, but there was an Inquisitor that believed you were the target. If that is the case the assassins failed but might try again".

Deacis: "Assassins? Who would dare to try to kill the Ecclesiarch of the Adeptus Ministorum? This is madness".

Celestine: "We live in mad times, Lord Ecclesiarch. The answers are beyond me but I think that if she escaped, Inquisitor Greyfax might shed a little light on the matter. There is an Inquisitorial keep not far south, we shall be safe there".

* * *

(Kyrillos coughing in the distance)

Greyfax: "Kyrillos! KYRILLOS!"

Kyrillos (coughing): "Over here, Inquisitor! I... Was that a plasma bomb?"

Greyfax: "Worse, an alpha level psychic event".

Kyrillos: "There is something moving amongst the smoke and flames. A figure? Someone burning with purple flames".

Alpha Psyker: "I have become the living martyr, the instrument of the eight-turned god. I will ascend to the realm of the ancients as an undying lord".

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "Surrender, heretic".

(Assassin sending a screaming psychic wave)

(Greyfax moaning from sudden pain and collapsing to the ground)

Kyrillos: "Inquisitor!"

Greyfax: "My powers are of no use against a mind of this magnitude. There is demon here as much as human".

Alpha Psyker: "All shall be carried as ash upon the winds of change".

Greyfax: "Let us see if the blessed rounds of my weapon can end this?"

(Greyfax unleashing three bolt rounds to no use)

Alpha Psyker: "I am fate's walker, the strider of destiny. My path cannot be changed".

Kyrillos: "The bolts are useless".

Greyfax: "Go, we do not have the means to face this foe".

(Greyfax and Kyrillos setting on a run)

Alpha Psyker: "You cannot outrun from the eight-turned god. You carry your dreams and nightmares within you".

(Assassin unleashing another warp-induced psychic strike)

Kyrillos (running away): "Emperor, save us!"

Greyfax (running away): "Living warp flame? Keep running, the fire is coming towards us!"

Alpha Psyker: "Do not fear the metamorphosis. Life and death are but the endless cycle of change. Embrace the rise of the inevitable one!"

Kyrillos (running away): "It's like the Imperial Aquila, an eagle from the Emperor".

Greyfax (running away): "You are not so far from the truth, a gunship of the Custodians... Down!"

Alpha Psyker: "Discord brings growth, harmony in... AAAAA"

(Custodes gunship shooting the assassin down)

Kyrillos (laughing hysterically): "Ha-ha, die, psyker abomination!"

Alpha Psyker (collapsing in the debris): "Foolishness".

(Custodes gunship landing down)

Longinus (from the gunship): "Inquisitor, ascend the ramp".

Greyfax (breathing hard, boarding the ship): "My thanks, Custodian".

Longinus: "I am the Centurion Longinus, Inquisitor. You are welcome".

Greyfax: "I fear our salvation may be short-lived".

Longinus: "Others are on their way, but I am to deal with the psychic threat".

Kyrillos: "I see them, a shadow hold craft, the Anathema Psykana, the Sisters of Silence".

(walking aboard the gunship)

(Adepta Sorroritas gunship landing, Celestine and several battle sisters leaving the ship)

Kyrillos: "Oh, Saint Celestine!"

Greyfax: "What of the Ecclesiarch? Is Deacis safe?"

Celestine: "He is, thanks only to your warning, Katarinya".

Longinus: "It is a little early to celebrate, you are not safe yet".

Greyfax: "An attack on Terra itself brazen and devastating. This is not the end of the matters, simply the start. There will be far worse to come".

* * *

Deacis: "I have lived all my life on Terra and never before seen a warrior of the Adeptus Custodes".

Greyfax: "Not just warriors of the Adeptus Custodes. You see the blackening of their auramite armor? That is caused by close proximity to the Emperor. This squad hails from the Companions, guardians of the Golden Throne".

Celestine: "Blessed are they to have labored beneath the sight of the Emperor himself, raised by his hand, his will made flesh".

Longinus: "Are any of you injured? Do you require a Medicae?"

Greyfax: "None of us are injured, Centurion".

Another Custodian: "Inquisitor, we are receiving a secured vox cast from Inquisitor Lord Trevayne".

Longinus: "It was Trevayne that alerted us to the potential assassination of the Ecclesiarch, Inquisitor".

Trevayne (over vox): "I have just spoken with Deacis and informed him that he cannot remain on Terra. Until we figure out the extent of this conspiracy he is still under threat. We have agreed that the cardinal world of Ophelia VII is the best sanctuary for the time being".

Celestine: "Katarinya, it was I that requested your company. I would feel that the Ecclesiarch is safer with you present. We cannot assume Ophelia VII is any safer than Terra and Deacis needs to remain public to keep the faithful strong in their devotion. He has powerful rivals within the Synod Ministra. If there is a conspiracy against him, it is as likely to be discovered there, as on Terra".

Greyfax: "Very well, I shall travel with you to Ophelia VII. Kyrillos, you will come with us also".

Kyrillos: "Huh, I will? But... But I've never left Terra before".

Trevayne (over vox): "If I have need of you or uncover anything of urgency I will send message by astropath to Ophelia VII. I trust that you will reciprocate".

Greyfax (over vox): "I will. When this crisis is passed, you will stand before your peers in conclave".

Trevayne (over vox): "I do not fear their judgment. Be sure you are in similar strength in your convictions, Katarinya".

(vox communication over)

Kyrillos: "Excuse me, Centurion, but it's interesting that you are called Longinus. There was another Centurion of the Companions with that name who intervened against the renegade Goge Vandire. He helped to end the Reign of Blood".

Celestine: "An event that was pivotal⁷⁰ in the founding of the Adepta Sorrowitas. It was Centurion Longinus that took Alicia Dominica and her closest lieutenants into the inner sanctum to come before the Emperor himself. When they emerged she declared Vandire a heretic and cut him down".

Kyrillos: "A remarkable coincidence".

Longinus: "My name is Xavier Aldamenion Lassid Longinus Aduprehiah Consultori. It is no coincidence that I have chosen to intervene again in the machinations of the Adeptus Ministorum. Though I would not venture my opinion on whether my master would approve or not of the organization, its presence is real and its power considerable. And as such I was tasked to maintain vigil against it from among my order".

Kyrillos: "Hm, what do you mean? Intervene again?"

Celestine: "The Reign of Blood ended nearly 4000 years ago".

Longinus: "Yes, I am surprised it has taken this long and so many political intrigues and disasters for a situation grave enough to occur that I felt the need to come forth again".

Celestine: "I kneel before you. It is an honor to present the blade of Saint Catherine which was once born by one of those you took before the Golden Throne. The Emperor answers our prayers with your presence".

Longinus: "Stand, Celestine! You honor me with this salute, but I cannot accept it nor your prayers. I act only in the interests of Emperor, not for any greater purpose. My blood is sworn to his protection, not the Imperial church or any of his servants".

Greyfax: "That is reassuringly blunt71".

Longinus: "Time is not an ally today. Others might try to kill the Ecclesiarch when they learn of his survival".

Celestine: "And they have the ability to bring the psyker assassin here, which means even the Sol system is not safe".

Longinus: "We will head directly to the closest Mandeville point and jump to warp space as soon as we can".

(door opening)

Greyfax: "Ecclesiarch Deacis".

Celestine: "The inner chamber is the most secure, Lord Ecclesiarch".

Deacis: "You have my gratitude for this assistance, Centurion Longinus. Oh, it is good that the Adeptus Ministorum and Adeptus Custodes can each serve the Emperor in their own ways but together".

Longinus: "I am coming with you, Deacis. My squad and I will see you safely to Ophelia VII".

Greyfax: "You are Companions of the Throne. I thought you never left the inner sanctum".

Longinus: "Until events of late the Adeptus Custodes did not leave the Imperial Palace. Yet now we travel again with the armies of the Emperor as we did in the time of the Great Crusade. Sometimes the best defense of the Master of Mankind begins a little further from home".

Deacis: "Huh, I am honored".

Longinus: "Do not be, my presence is not for your benefit. I am aware of your intent to gather a new host of Frateris Templars. I am yet to decide if such an act would be a threat to the Emperor".

Deacis: "I see. Hm, it seems I am surrounded by guardians that wish to protect me only for the privilege of executing me themselves".

Celestine: "I have no intent to slay you, Lord Ecclesiarch, and will endeavor to dissuade any other from doing so".

Deacis: "That is a little comfort I suppose".

* * *

Celestine: "Katarinya".

Greyfax: "What is it, sister? I have transmissions from Lord Trewayne to decipher".

Celestine: "Longinus passes word that we are only a day's more travel from the jump point".

Greyfax: "Good".

Celestine: "Katarinya, you have avoided me since we transferred to this Custodian warship, but I would like to know something".

Greyfax: "What?"

Celestine: "It is clear that the vision the Emperor gifted me was warning of these terrible events. Did you receive warning as well?"

Greyfax: "Of a sort".

(Katarinya calling the elevator)

Celestine: "Ah, I understand your reticence⁷². You are after all an Inquisitor and under no obligation to discuss anything with me".

Greyfax: "You are correct".

Celestine: "I had hoped, given that we have fought alongside each other before, that you would trust me by now".

Greyfax: "Thousands of people were turned to ash ten days ago by someone possessing psychic power I had not witnessed before. His last thoughts were of killing unbelievers for his dark god".

Celestine: "All the more reason that we should not be at odds⁷³ with one another".

Greyfax: "I detect the stench of the abyss all over this plot, not political wrangling⁷⁴ between overly protected sects of the Adeptus Ministorum".

(elevator arriving)

Greyfax: "I will see you when... I would rather..."

Celestine: "I have prayed for you, Katarinya. The God Emperor watches over you whether you believe it or not".

Greyfax: "I am not about to share my thoughts with someone that manifests wings, levitates without aid, has returned from the dead at least half a dozen times and claims to receive visions from the Emperor".

Celestine (smiling): "I know you do not share my faith, but if you really believed I was tainted, you would execute me on the spot. I have not seen you show any compunction⁷⁵ about doing so with others that you perceived to be a threat".

Greyfax: "You are tempting me at the moment".

Celestine: "So I must assume that you accept me in some fashion. Do you not see your own powers as gifts from the Emperor?"

Greyfax: "I have seen the source of my powers and test myself against its corruption every time I use them. If you are blind to the font⁷⁶ of your abilities,

you accept them without question and that is a path that leads to damnation, no matter how many Ave Imperatori you invoke⁷⁷ before you go to bed”.

Celestine: “Even so you cannot ignore the purpose in my coming to Terra. Had I not been on hand the Ecclesiarch would be dead. Do you not see the Emperor’s work in this?”

Greyfax: “If I were even to indulge⁷⁸ the idea that the Emperor remains cogent⁷⁹ of any mortal thought and that he possesses the means to communicate with them in any fashion, it is still a stretch that he would do so to return you to life and bring you across the galaxy just to save the life of Deacis, when he was willing for a hundred thousand others to die”.

(elevator finally arriving)

Celestine: “It is a burden for you to think that he might have acted to spare you as well. If you were to have faith and accept that as I do, then you would also have to accept that the salvation for the Ecclesiarch was not without further purpose. Katarinya, I know you think I am some kind of charlatan or worse, an abomination. But am I so different to those within your organization, that use the Emperor’s Tarot to divine his will?”

Greyfax: “They are equally misguided”.

Celestine: “If you cannot...”

(Deacis slowly approaching Celestine and Greyfax)

Greyfax: “Another holy ambush...”

Deacis: “My two saviors in close consultation, I see”.

Celestine: “Lord Ecclesiarch”.

Greyfax: “It might still only be a stay of execution”.

Deacis: “Why do I sense that you are not only talking about the possibility of more assassins?”

Greyfax: “I see that Trevayne was less than forthcoming⁸⁰ about his involvement in this affair”.

Deacis: “On the contrary he confessed his part to me in full”.

Greyfax: “He told you that he had planned to have you killed?”

Celestine: “The massacre was perpetrated by the Inquisition?”

Greyfax: “No, it was not. Even so it would have been within our rimet to have done so. What count a hundred thousand faithful lost compared to the billions that might be killed in a planetary Exterminatus? Even this grotesque attack would be thought of as controlled and precise by some of my Ordo”.

Deacis: “I see... No, lord Trevayne said he had uncovered the content of my speech and had thought to stop me. I had not realized he meant with lethal measure”.

Greyfax: “Now you understand the extent of his opposition”.

Deacis: “He did tell me it was argument from you that had changed his mind”.

Celestine: “Eh, what could an Ascension Day speech contain that would warrant⁸¹ such retribution?”

Deacis: “I plan to revoke the Decree Passive, lady Celestine. Too long your sisterhood has borne the front of fighting for the Adeptus Ministorum. It is time we broadened our powers again”.

Celestine: “Saint Thor divested⁸² himself of those powers for a reason, Lord Ecclesiarch. I would urge you to reconsider”.

Deacis (clearing his throat): “The Adepta Sorrowitas enjoys considerable benefits from its position as the Ecclesiarchy’s only Order Militant. There are some among the Synod who believe the Adepta Sorrowitas wield that power for their own interests, rather than that of the Imperial church”.

Celestine: “I am sure there are”.

Deacis: “Such monopoly of military force is not good for the Ecclesiarchy”.

Greyfax: “The need of the Imperium is better served if such military might is not concentrated too closely at all. The Ecclesiarchy has its own ships capable of warp travel, a resource purposefully denied to the regiments of the Astra Militarum. To curtail⁸³ the ambitions of colonels and generals, there would be no limit to your ability to move armies across the stars”.

Celestine: “I am of similar thought, lord Ecclesiarch”.

Greyfax: “The founding of the sisterhood of which you speak came about from the megalomania of Goge Vandire, one of your predecessors”.

Deacis: “You think I would unleash another Reign of Blood? What of the great wars that could be won?”

Greyfax: “The power is not for you, but for the position”.

Deacis: “I am not seeking your permission, Inquisitor”.

Greyfax: “You will not live forever. Any powers you grant yourself will outlast you and be open to exploitation by a successor. Whether I trust you or not is irrelevant”.

Deacis: “But you spoke on my behalf. I thought you supported me”.

Greyfax: “I spoke against your summary execution to avoid creating a schism within the Imperial church. It was not an endorsement⁸⁴ of your full hardy plan”.

Celestine: “Nothing yet has been announced”.

Deacis: “To those that matter the announcement is simply a formality. I would sacrifice any authority if I renege⁸⁵ on the pledges I have made to my supporters”.

Celestine: “Is your position more important than the future of the Ecclesiarchy?”

Deacis: “I am...”

Greyfax (interrupting): "It is several weeks warp travel to the Ophelia system, Ecclesiarch. Perhaps you should use that time to reconsider your plans. It is not too late to chart⁸⁶ a better course for the Adeptus Ministorum".

(Katarinya leaving)

* * *

Custodian: "Centurion, we have reached safe distance from Terra. The tech-priests report that they are ready to engage the warp engines".

Longinus: "Very well, we will engage Gellar fields imminently".

Celestine: "I will say a few words of sanctity⁸⁷ first, if I may".

Longinus: "Be brief".

Celestine: "Lord on Terra, who watches over humanity and guides us to our lordship of the stars, I ask you to extend your protection to us again this day. I know that you share the pain we have felt these last fifteen days to leave the sacred soil of the Throne world behind in these troubled times. We have not abandoned you, but press on toward the next battle, confident that the sacrifices we make in your name are but a fraction of the sacrifices you have made for us".

Greyfax: "Heh, if that was the brief version..."

Longinus: "Signal the warp engine crew to begin initiation ceremonies. Send word to Ecclesiarch Deacis, that we are about to depart the Sol system".

Celestine: "Where is Kyrillos?"

Greyfax: "Keeping Diaces's company in his chambers".

Celestine: "By which you mean he is spying on the Ecclesiarch".

Greyfax: "Diaces's cloistered⁸⁸ himself away these past two weeks, preparing missives⁸⁹ he claims. I want to know what he intends when he arrives at Ophelia VII".

Celestine: "Was it your cynicism that drew the eye of the Inquisition to you? Or has it developed since you found that calling?"

Greyfax: "A more recent acquisition really. The Imperium is in a worse state than it has been since... well, perhaps for ten thousand years. Sundered, attacked on all sides and from within and I have made so many compromises to what I thought was right just to survive this long".

Celestine: "You speak of the xenos and what happened with the Primarch. You helped to bring hope when there was nothing but despair".

Greyfax: "Did I? I do not have any hope. How is it you can be so positive, who has died again and again for this moldering⁹⁰ pile of humanity?"

Celestine: "The lord on the Throne gave off his life for his servants to prosper. Who am I to do any less if he asks it of me? The Imperium has passed through many dark ages, each of which have seemed like a time of ending. Now is no

different. With his strength and our dedication we shall persevere⁹¹ and overcome. You need to have faith, Katarinya”.

Greyfax: “In the Emperor or humanity?”

Celestine: “How about having a little faith in me? That would be a start”.
(sirens going off)

Servitor: “Commencing translation to warp space”.

(warship jumping into warp with a low droning noise)

Custodian: “Centurion, Navigator Elixio wishes to speak with you”.

Longinus: “Put him on the main vox”.

Navigator (over vox): “Centurion! We have translated to warp space but I cannot locate the Astronomicon”.

Longinus (over vox): “How can you not see the Emperor’s light? We have just left the Sol system”.

Navigator (over vox): “A surge⁹² of the warp storm, Centurion. I feel a glimmer of the light of Terra but I cannot chart a course to Ophelia VII. It is lost beyond the ripples caused by the Great Rift. And something worse, Centurion, clouding the warp with malignancy⁹³. There is a presence close by, something moving toward us”.

Greyfax (over vox): “Another ship? Did anyone else know about our planned jump point?”

Navigator (over vox): “Not a ship, something of the warp. Something hunting us, I fear. Diabolis”.

Longinus (over vox): “How long do we have until it reaches us?”

Navigator (over vox): “Minutes, no longer. It moves swiftly. I can see the bow wave of its approach. Something with terrible power is coming. It is a growing darkness upon my warp sight”.

Celestine (over vox): “I will lead the way. My sisters in the Convent Sanctorum will guide me to them!”

(Celestine treading away)

Longinus: “What does she mean?”

Greyfax: “I do not know, I am not her keeper”.

Longinus: “Yet, you would be her judge. Even in the Imperial dungeon word reached me of Saint Celestine and Inquisitor Greyfax, two heroes of the Imperium that almost saved Cadia from the Despoiler. Is it true that you rescued her from beneath Abaddon’s diabolic blade?”

Greyfax: “I did, though I wonder if I should have let it fall”.

Longinus: “It is also said you can see the lies of your foes even before they’ve spent the breath to speak them. Yet you seem incapable to see the mistruth you tell yourself each day”.

Greyfax: “And what gives you the right or skill to think you know me?”

Navigator (over vox): "I feel the chill of the shadow that falls upon us. Where is the saint?"

Longinus: "The Custodians have long studied the minds of the Emperor's servants and learned to do so from the lessons of our master. You cannot deflect the truth forever. One day you will admit that you hate Celestine so much because you envy her".

Greyfax: "Yes, I would dearly love to sprout wings and fly like a golden..."

Longinus: "Your faith is unshakeable, yet every day you must conquer your own doubts. But it is the teaching of the Inquisition that doubt begets heresy. You fear yourself more than any foe and the thought that you might be wrong causes you a dread greater than death".

Custodian: "Centurion, we are receiving a request from Saint Celestine to open the forward airlock gates on the command level".

Greyfax: "She cannot be serious".

Navigator (over vox): "The tide turns against us, Centurion. This is no ripple, but a wave that will sweep us away. I am blinded and deafened by its power. It is almost upon us".

Longinus: "Unseal the lock. Let sister Celestine outside".

Greyfax: "Into the warp? Are you insane?"

Longinus: "If your hand moves any closer to your weapon, Inquisitor, I will relieve you of it".

Greyfax: "My weapon?"

Longinus: "Your hand".

Navigator (over vox): "Ten thousand soul fangs close upon us, the darkness. We shall fall into the abyssal darkness. Centurion, I beg you, activate the warp engines! We must flee back to real space. If we stay we shall be devoured".

Custodian: "Airlock open, Centurion".

Celestine (over vox): "In the greatest darkness look to the Emperor to light the path for the righteous".

Navigator (over vox): "Now, Centurion! We need to..."

(pause of unease)

Navigator (over vox): "Golden light pierces the fog... I see her! The Astronomicon reflects from her soul and banishes the shadows! (sobbing) Blessed are we, delivered from the abyss!"

Custodian: "Look to the main display, Centurion!"

Greyfax: "As I first saw her on Cadia so like an angel painted upon the cathedral roof".

Longinus: "A spark in the night leading us through the shadows".

OUR MARTYRED LADY - CONSPIRACY THEORIES (2019)

Written by Gav Thorpe

Performed by Catherine Tate, Emma Gregory, David Sibley, Richard Reed, Ramon Tikaram, Toby Longworth, Jo Woodcock, Melvin Rawlinson, and Matthew Hunt

Scripted by Reverend

LIST OF CHARACTERS:

- * Celestine, the Living Saint
- * Inquisitor Katarinya Greyfax
- * Ecclesiarch Deacis
- * Custodian Longinus
- * Spy Kyrillos
- * Marshal Gardhelm
- * Heretic Hermida cardinal Kultza
- * cardinal Benedict Husheen
- * interrogator Antilios
- * Sister Superior;
- * heretics Nikos, Mondatra, Sharith

Kyrillos: "Almost safe now, Lord Ecclesiarch. Home ground, so to speak. Although Centurion Longinus, I would be happier if the rest of your squad had remained with us".

Greyfax: "I think we should be thankful for what we have, Kyrillos. To enjoy the protection of a single Custodian, a Companion at that, is without precedent".

Longinus: "You are right, Inquisitor. While I remain, I will do all I can to ensure the safety of the Ecclesiarch. My Companions will be better employed with their return to Terra, given the anarchy the darkness has spread since our departure".

Deacis: "Hm a terrible time, but a moment delayed will soon be upon us again. For two months the cardinals had been gathering on Ophelia VII and when we land I will be able to make my declaration in full. Sister Celestine, we stand upon a brink of a glorious epoch for the Imperial cult".

Celestine: "Is this wise, Lord Ecclesiarch? Can the Adeptus Ministorum afford to make enemies within the Inquisition and doubtless face hostility from the Astra Militarum and the Adeptus Astartes?"

Greyfax: "We were lucky to escape at all. A powerful force was unleashed against you, Ecclesiarch".

Longinus: "Yes, if not for Celestine we might all have been lost in the warp. I hope my Companions' return to the Throne world is less fraught¹".

Deacis: "Are we to turn aside from the righteous path simply because there are those that would set obstacles before us, revered lady? Did Sebastian Thor allow his purpose to be bogged² by opposition?"

Longinus: "What is that?"

Kyrillos: "Hallelujah Militant in the key of F probably".

Greyfax: "Why is there singing?"

Celestine: "Sebastian Thor chose to relinquish the armies of the Ecclesiarchy".

Deacis: "Thor fought for what he believed was right. Do you think he created the Confederation of Light with only pious³ words? Did he overthrow Goge Vandire with prayer alone? No!"

Celestine: "Thor also knew the corrupting influence of power. Temporal might is the destruction from the holy mission of the Ecclesiarchy. Your efforts are better spent bolstering⁴ the courage and faith of the Emperor's soldiers than trying to lead military campaigns".

Kyrillos: "I expect the crew of the orbital station have roused themselves to give the Ecclesiarch a suitable welcome".

Longinus: "You alerted them to our arrival?"

Deacis: "I am Ecclesiarch of the Adeptus Ministorum. I do not skulk⁵ like a thief, especially as I arrive at the greatest of our cardinal worlds".

Greyfax: "You were also the target of an assassination attempt seventy days ago. If those enemies know you were coming here..."

Kyrillos: "This maybe my fault, Inquisitor. When I arranged for the transfer lander to take us to down the surface, I told the station officials, it was for the Ecclesiarch".

Greyfax (sarcastically): "Wonderful!"

Deacis: "I am accompanied by an Inquisitor, a Centurion of the Companions and a Living Saint. I feel quite safe. (clearing his throat) Now, Celestine, back to our discussion. You understand that you stand beside me clad in armor, bearing a sword while you tell me that my duty is to spread the Imperial creed by word alone".

Celestine: "You think I am a hypocrite⁶?"

Deacis: "I think you are conflicted. How could you mark the battle sisters so remarkable that they can be trusted with physical power, whilst condemning those that would emulate⁷ you?"

Celestine: "I was raised for war, Lord Ecclesiarch. My soul was made for battle".

Deacis: "You were an orphan raised by the Imperial church and given weapons and armor, nothing more. You are a product of the Schola Progenium, a castaway⁸ made useful. The Ecclesiarchy does the same for those that become soldiers of the Tempestus Scions that we supply to the Imperial Guard".

Greyfax: "Wait here!"

(Greyfax leaving)

Deacis: "Of course, Inquisitor. Why should we not arm the scions⁹ ourselves and send to war directly, Celestine, rather than wait upon the Departmento Munitorum to bear them away to their fate?"

Celestine: "I claim no particular virtue, Lord Ecclesiarch. I do not doubt your moral purpose either. Yet can you swear to the Emperor that every deacon and cardinal that serves you will act with equal righteousness?"

Longinus: "The shuttle base is across this platform and up two levels to the station's apex, a five minute walk".

(crowd noticing Celestine, Custodian and Ecclesiarch in enticement)

Greyfax: "We have only arrived just yet. Even with Kyrillos's error that is little time to react to the news of Deaces's presence".

Deacis: "The Decree Passive is gesture, not an absolute law. When a company of the Imperial Guard loses its officers and follows a preacher into the midst of the enemy, are they not already soldiers of the Imperial church?"

Greyfax: "Under the eye of the Commissars and subject to the Departmento Munitorum and limitations of transport by the Imperial Navy. You wish to create an independent mobile force of Frateris Templars".

Deacis: "Perhaps, however our missionaries frequently hire mercenaries to protect them in the wild systems".

Greyfax: "That's still does not equate to a standing army, Ecclesiarch".

Deacis: "But why the sudden concern now, when we need warriors the most? Thor forbade men under arms, and so the Adeptus Ministorum immediately raised the Orders Militant of Battle Sisters sidestepping¹⁰ the literal law, but not its intent. What more proof do you need that the Decree Passive is a law that exists in word more than deed?"

Longinus: "Weapon, get back!"

Heretic (in the distance): "Take in the front priest!"

(battle erupting on the platform)

Greyfax: "Back inside!"

Longinus: "Driver, stop the carriage!"

Driver (being killed in the gun fight): "Oh!"

Deacis: "The Centurion, we can't leave him".

Greyfax: "Stay down, Deacis!"

Celestine: "Jump, Centurion! Take my hand!"

(characters successfully leaving the station platform in a carriage)

Deacis: "Perhaps you could get off me, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "Seems I was wrong to assume the enemy would not have time to organize another attack".

Celestine: "What next?"

Greyfax: "Centurion, you are the most experienced in such matters".

Longinus: "We cannot stay here and allow further attempts on the Ecclesiarch's life. We must get off the station".

* * *

Greyfax: "You seem to know where we are going, Centurion".

Longinus: "Saint Aleph's station was built from standard template construct. Its layout is similar to thousands of others across the galaxy".

Kyrillos: "And you memorized it?"

Longinus: "Of course".

Celestine: "How can we be sure that there will be no attack when we board the shuttle?"

Longinus: "We can't be. But if the enemy had the means to attack the shuttle, I think they would have waited until then. It is the better ambush site. The assault on the transport carriage was hasty and clumsy".

Greyfax: "Scanned relief if we get blasted out of the void by one of the station's gun batteries".

Kyrillos: "We could hide out somewhere and send word for the battle sisters and arbitrators to take over the station".

Longinus: "It could take several hours for sufficient forces to mobilize. Better to keep moving, take the initiative and exit the compromised zone".

Kyrillos: "I am not..."

Longinus (interrupting): "I have protected the Emperor against all manner of threats for longer than you can imagine, adept. This is what I was created for".
(heretics unleashing laser fire)

Greyfax: "They've found us. Longinus, our lives are in your hands".

Longinus: "Through here, keep moving".

Kyrillos (running): "I am beginning to think someone really doesn't want you to deliver that speech, holy Ecclesiarch".

Deacis (running): "Do you not see what is happening, Celestine? The Imperium is changing, breaking apart. When the renegades come upon our shrine worlds, who will answer? The Adeptus Mechanicus protect their forge worlds..."

Greyfax (interrupting): "This is not the time..."

Deacis (running): "The Departamento Munitorum values hive cities and arms manufacturers over the temples of faith. Why can the Adeptus Ministorum not look to itself rather than the charity of the Imperial Guard?"

Celestine (running): "The Lord Commander has left Space Marines to guard Ophelia VII. A crusade of Black Templars patrols the nearby star systems".

Deacis (running): "Guilliman is no warrior of faith. He tolerates us but nothing more. The Adeptus Astartes are growing in power. The old laws that curbed¹¹ their strength had been abandoned".

Longinus (running): "This way, to the left! Under that bridge!"
(several torrents of stab fire)

Deacis (running): "The Primarch builds an empire for himself beyond the Great Rift and the oldest Chapters of the Space Marines call out to their successors gathering their numbers again. They care nothing for the Imperial church".

Celestine (running): "It was the Lord Commander that created the Codex Astartes, that laid down those curbs of power of which you speak".

Deacis (running): "Just as saints of us have signed the Decree Passive under threat of attack. Tell me, Celestine, what Guilliman intends with these new warriors, his Primaris Marines? An army conjured out of nowhere by forbidden technology. What more efforts do you need that he cares as much for his Codex Astartes as the litanies of faith?"

Celestine (running): "You make it sounds as though he seeks to rule the Imperium himself".

Deacis (running): "There is a history you do not know, Celestine. A past, hidden from you..."

Greyfax (angrily, running): "This is not the time for this discussion".

Deacis (running): "Heh, maybe not, but Celestine... You must believe me when I say, there have been times when the likes of Guilliman have turned on the Emperor. When the Space Marines have pursued their own goals ahead of the Imperium's. If Guilliman declared a return to the ancient, faithless ways, who would protect us from his domination?"

Celestine (running): "Such heresy would not be allowed".

Greyfax (running): "Say no more, Ecclesiarch!"

Deacis (running): "I need the support of the sisterhood, Celestine, not their opposition. Our enemies will exploit any division. When darkness surrounds us, we must create our own light".

Longinus (running): "In here! The shuttle docks are ahead".
(everyone finally halting the run)

Kyrillos (breathing hard): "I think they have stopped following".

Longinus: "Yes, the slinked¹² back into the shadows. We may never identify them".

Greyfax: "There will be a reckoning for this, I assure you".

Deacis (breathing hard): "There most certainly will, Inquisitor. Celestine, can I rely upon you to do what is right?"

Celestine: "I remain as ever your servant, Lord Ecclesiarch".

Deacis: "Ah, the Emperor has already set the truth in your heart, revered lady. I am sure you will follow the righteous path".

* * *

Kyrrillos: "Ah, the chamber ordinal! One of the wonders of Ophelia! Few not of the Synod Ministra are privileged to pass within".

Longinus: "Stay vigilant or it may be the last sight you enjoy. The cardinals are almost all here and Deacis will arrive shortly".

Greyfax: "I am not sure if our final arrival at this moment is for better or worse".

Kyrrillos: "I am rather glad to still be alive all things considered and the Ecclesiarch's death would mean even more strife¹³ for the Imperium".

Greyfax: "Which is the only comfort I take, that whatever plot we thwart¹⁴, must be worse than Deacis's plans".

Kyrrillos: "Am I the only one who thinks it's unwise that we have assembled nearly half of the remaining highest-ranking cardinals in the Imperium in one place just two months after the other half were vaporized?"

Greyfax: "The thought had occurred, Kyrrillos. Given your earlier failings I trust that you've been more diligent in your investigation since we arrived at Ophelia?"

Kyrrillos: "I've been unable to discover anything amiss in the Synod Ministra. Anything more than usual, I mean. I'll keep looking for some connection between the atrocity on Terra and the incident at Saint Aleph's station".

Greyfax: "Keep your eyes open. The attack on the orbital station was opportunistic¹⁵ but this conclave has been two months in preparation".

Longinus: "I wonder, Inquisitor, why you have allowed this matter to escalate?"

Greyfax: "I've yet to see any evidence that the Ecclesiarch has acted against the Imperium. I would have more issue if he attempted to gather an army by clandestine¹⁶ means".

Longinus: "This will be your last chance to silence him before he officially lifts the Decree Passive. Once he publicly makes his will known, you will have an even harder time stifling¹⁷ any machinations for power".

Greyfax: "You are venturing into fresh waters, Centurion. Water is already well patrolled. It is one thing for the Adeptus Custodes to concern themselves with the protection of the Emperor in physical sense, another to stand guardian of more spiritual and moral matters".

Kyrrillos: "The cardinals are all here. Now for the Ecclesiarch to make..."
(heralds blowing the trumpets)

Kyrrillos: "Deacis bears the scepter of Thor. It must have been recovered from the ruins of the Ecclesiarchal palace".

Greyfax: "Does it matter which decorative rod he carries?"

Kyrillos: "No Ecclesiarch has carried that scepter since Sebastian Thor. Deacis thinks himself a saint in the making".

(Deacis slowly going to the dais)

Deacis: "Blessings of the God Emperor upon this gathering! Today is a great day for the Imperial church!"

Greyfax: "Be watchful".

Deacis: "Many of you have traveled far and at some personal risk to be here and no doubt wish to return to your duties without delay. So I shall keep this brief. There are forces at large in the galaxy that would see humanity crushed and eternal darkness prevail. Our bastion against these foes since time immemorial has been the God Emperor, protector and master, the guide whose light unites us all against the unholy".

Longinus: "I am not sure the Emperor would approve of anything that occurs today".

Deacis: "Emerging from the terrors of the Long Night the Emperor had made himself known to his people and led us back to the stars. At the height of his triumph he was betrayed and gave off his own mortal life so that his followers might endure. As God Emperor he guards us even now, shielding us against countless enemies that would see us extinct".

Greyfax: "With some assistance".

Deacis: "In his sacrifice he showed us the way forward. Though his psychical form is sustained by the greatness of the Golden Throne, the spirit of the Emperor is given strength from our faith".

Longinus: "And a thousand psykers a day".

Deacis: "Through him did the Great Patinicus travel to Terra to anoint¹⁸ himself upon the steps of the Imperial Palace and from thence forward rose the temple of the Savior Emperor, becoming the print¹⁹ institution of the Ecclesiarchy".

Greyfax: "I think Deacis needs a lesson in the meaning of brevity".

Deacis: "For many thousands of years the Emperor..." (voice fading)

Kyrillos: "He is really going to do it, isn't he?"

Greyfax: "This is not rhetoric. He actually believes he carries out the Emperor's will".

Kyrillos: "Perhaps, he does".

Longinus: "To what extent will you allow him to extend his power? If Deacis wishes to recruit the millions of faithful that survived the pilgrimage to Terra, would you stop him?"

Greyfax: "If you wish to use that guardian spear I am not inclined to intervene. Would you slay Deacis preemptively, knowing that disorder and carnage²⁰ will follow?"

Kyrillos: "Also I think that Saint Celestine might not stand by while you make the attempt. See how she looks at us, not even a glance for the cardinals".

Greyfax: "She thinks the Emperor has returned her to protect Deacis. She would give her life for him".

Longinus: "If she sought to impede²¹ me, I would not hesitate".

Kyrillos: "Heh, a Centurion of the Adeptus Custodes fighting a Living Saint. I wouldn't be confident if I was either of you".

Greyfax: "One of the reasons I am content to allow this to continue for the time being. Deacis already has the Orders Militant sent into battle if he wished to do so".

Deacis: "The God Emperor laid his blessing. Long had we deliberated²² this and consensus has been reached. The Emperor would have us do this deed, otherwise he would not have sent glorious Celestine to save me when so many others perished in calamity²³. I count myself blessed these last few months to stand here before you to make this declaration. The Emperor indeed protects".

Greyfax: "As does the conversion field generator built into your new broach".

Deacis: "I do not doubt the righteousness of this cause. In the age passed the Imperial church called upon the regiments of the Frateris Templars to fight the enemies of our immortal lord. We will do so again! So it is I, Deacis the 23rd, Lord Ecclesiarch of the Adeptus Ministorum, rescind the Decree Passive legal by Sebastian Thor".

(crowd exploding in chatter)

Longinus: "The first rock – Templars, now we will see how distractive the avalanche becomes".

* * *

Celestine: "The Ecclesiarch is in the tower atop the basilica. I assume he is the target of this latest attack".

Greyfax: "Do we know who they are? What they want? Deacis's speech was eight days ago and its content has been carried to systems across the galaxy. Why attack now?"

(Sister Superior approaching)

Celestine: "Sister Superior, you have something to report?"

Sister Superior: "Lady Celestine, we've discovered charges missing from the celebratory munition store as well as six las display projectors".

Greyfax: "Both could be modified to create the explosion that tore out the roof. Who else knew that the Ecclesiarch would be here?"

Sister Superior: "Everyone, Inquisitor. The blessing of the bells is a public engagement due to commence upon the hour. The entourage²⁴ was several dozen strong, mainly clerics and menials²⁵".

Greyfax: "And you've tried to subdue²⁶ them?"

Celestine: "Not yet. The tower is only accessed by a single old stairway, easily mined and defended. Judging by the damage we can see from here the attackers were already in the basilica and detonated their device behind the Ecclesiarch's entourage trapping them on the upper levels".

Greyfax: "Give me a moment, my ear piece has activated".

Kyrillos (over vox): "Inquisitor Greyfax, are you receiving this?"

Greyfax (coldly, over vox): "Yes, yes, I can hear you".

Kyrillos (over vox): "I am with Ecclesiarch, Inquisitor. He is alive but injured".

Greyfax (coldly, over vox): "Where are you?"

Kyrillos (over vox): "We've locked ourselves in one of the robing chambers at the basis of the upper tower".

Greyfax (over vox): "Who attacked you?"

Kyrillos (over vox): "I don't know, Inquisitor. All I remember is the explosion and then stumbling²⁷ through the smoke to get here".

Greyfax (over vox): "Very well, stay where you are and keep me updated".

Sister Superior: "Centurion Longinus wishes to approach us, Sister Superior".

Celestine: "Let him through".

(Longinus approaching)

Greyfax: "You arrived quickly, Centurion".

Longinus: "Like yourself I've stayed close to the Ecclesiarch in the present political climate".

Greyfax: "Deacis is alive for the time being. Let me see if I can ascertain²⁸ any more about the assailants, though they are quite distant".

(Greyfax using her psyker abilities)

Assailant 1: "Guards are going to come up any time now. We cannot be taken alive".

Assailant 2: "Where is Hermida? She was supposed to be back by now at the Bow Sisters corner".

(Greyfax coming around)

Greyfax: "Fourteen attackers. There were six more but they died in the explosion and the fight with the battle sister escort, nobody of significant rank".

Longinus: "How did they overpower ten sisters of the Orders Militant?"

Supiria: "Most of the escort was killed during the explosion, Centurion. Two survivors managed to flash vox warning to summon us, but we've lost contact about thirty seconds later".

Kyrillos (over vox): "Inquisitor, they've brought a plasma las to cut through the door".

Greyfax (over vox): "How long until they are inside?"

Kyrillos (over vox): "It seems I've missed the part of my training that covered structural engineering of Ecclesiarchy portals and their resistance to different tools. Given their progress maybe two minutes?"

Greyfax (over vox): "Are you armed?"

Kyrillos (over vox): "Only with my wits".

Greyfax (over vox): "Defenseless then. (to all) The renegades are trying to cut their way through the chamber. We have to do something now or they will reach the Ecclesiarch".

Celestine: "We cannot risk the assault from within. Who can say if they have set other traps?"

Supiria: "Reinforcements will be arriving from the convent. Three squads of Seraphim among them".

Greyfax: "Not soon enough".

Longinus: "Jump packs would not reach that height even if they were already here".

Celestine: "Then it seems we have only one option".

(Celestine spreading her wings and taking flight)

Longinus: "I have seen many impressive things in my long life, but I must admit seeing the Living Saint in full glory ranks highly among them".

Greyfax: "Hm..."

Supiria: "The Emperor's strength goes with you, revered sister".

Greyfax (over vox): "Can you see them?"

Celestine (over vox): "Not very well. Where is the Ecclesiarch meant to be?"

Greyfax (over vox): "In a robing chamber near the base of the main tower, that is all I know".

Celestine (over vox): "I... I cannot see them, but there is wide breach in the wall not far from the central stairwell²⁹. I will come upon them from there. Oh, by the Emperor's will I shall bring vengeance upon those that strike against his most holy servants".

Greyfax (over vox): "One or two alive would be good".

Celestine (laughing menacingly over vox): "Hahaha, I shall endeavor³⁰ to spare some for your interrogation, but I make no promises. The death of my sisters stir³¹s my wrath and the Emperor's righteousness fills my veins".

(Celestine smashing into the tower)

Heretic (charging): "Love inside, kill the Ecclesiarch's wretch!"

(heretics unleashing bolter fire)

Celestine (over vox): "They have taken the sacred weapons of my fallen sisters".

(Celestine engaging in melee combat, slaying two heretics)

Celestine: "The Emperor's vengeance finds you this night, heretics! I am the blade of retribution".

Heretic (in the distance): "Some kind of force field! Our bolts cannot touch her".

Celestine: "The mantle of the Emperor's grace lies upon me, heretic! You cannot turn the weapons of my sacred sisters against a true servant".

Heretic Nikos (in the distance): "Hermida, trap! Quicker!"

Heretic Mondatra (in the distance): "I'll take the witch! Slay the renegade Deacis! The star shall shine brighter for their martyrdom".

Celestine: "For that blasphemy I shall gift you to the attentions of the Inquisition".

(Celestine slaying more screaming heretics in melee)

Celestine: "The faithless shall fall before the righteous, for their selfishness robs them of true purpose!"

(Celestine approaching Hermida)

Celestine: "You must be the one they call Hermida".

Hermida: "I'll take your head, you cursed witch!"

(Celestine knocking the shit out of Hermida)

Celestine: "You too shall feel the excoriations of Greyfax before your demise".

(Celestine treading towards the door)

Celestine (opening the door): "Ecclesiarch, can you hear me?"

Kyrillos: "Saint Celestine, oh praise the Emperor!"

Celestine (grimly): "Praise him indeed".

* * *

(cathedral bells chiming)

(congregation singing religious hymns in the distance)

Greyfax (approaching): "Kyrillos!"

Kyrillos: "What is it, Inquisitor?"

Greyfax: "The cardinals are departing and I would have words with some of them before they leave the planet. Where have you been? It's been two days since the basilica attack".

Kyrillos: "Recovering from the stress. It's not been easy, Inquisitor. You cannot imagine the bureaucracy I've had to negotiate just to get close to the Ecclesiarch again".

Greyfax: "And this is my concern because..."

Kyrillos: "Deacis is a little unsure of my connection to you. And so he's been frankly suspicious of me and not forthcoming in renewing my access privileges

in his new regime. On top of that the local lay of clerics has guarded against an interloper from Terra arriving in their midst”.

Greyfax: “If this preamble to admission of some failure on your part I would dispense for the excuses and speed out the confession”.

Kyrillos: “Not at all, Inquisitor. No failure on my part. We have received word from lord Trevayne that he uncovered a link to one of the Synod Ministra. I had to draw up a list of cardinals to investigate based on some vague recollections of the assassin, an necropath plucked from the deathly aura around the remains of the cathedral. I think I have found something, someone of note. Cardinal Kultza”.

Greyfax: “Why did you not just start with that?”

Kyrillos: “Oh...”

Greyfax: “It does not matter, tell me about cardinal Kultza”.

Kyrillos: “Oh, where to start? Kultza is one of the most powerful members of the Synod Ministra among several dozen cardinals that hold governorship of shrine worlds for the most part”.

Greyfax: “Hm, go on”.

Kyrillos: “Many of them have promised to devote their legally raised planetary defense forces to the Frateris Templars, but Trevayne uncovered that Kultza began the mobilization of his troops and ships before the Decree Passive was withdrawn”.

Greyfax: “I see. We know that Deacis sought support from most of the cardinals before making his declaration. Kultza preempted the announcement to gain some advantage. We need to find out more about Kultza before there is another assassination attempt”.

Kyrillos: “As I thought too, Inquisitor, but I dug a little more. The other Imperial commanders are transporting their troops here to the great muster³² called by the Ecclesiarch, not Kultza according to navigator reports. Along with the detachment of Tempestus Scions from Schola Progenium abbeys within his diocese Kultza sent his forces to the San Leor system, which has been lost to a warp storm since that cataclysm of the Cicatrix Maledictum tore the warp asunder”.

Greyfax: “San Leor? Why would anybody send troops there?”

* * *

Celestine: “Aux Spiritus Dominatus Domine Libra Nos! From the lightning and the tempest, our Emperor, deliver us! From plague, temptation and war, our Emperor, deliver us. From the scourge³³ of the kraken, our Emperor, deliver us. From the begetting³⁴ of demons, our Emperor, deliver us. From the curse of the mutant, our Emperor, deliver us. Aux Morte Perpetua Domine Libra Nos! That thou

wouldst bring them only death! That thou shouldst spare none. That thou shouldst pardon none. We beseech³⁵ thee, destroy them! Master of Mankind, lord of the Imperium, golden king, I am your will and your weapon, send me your guidance so that I might know the path forward. Your realm trembles beneath the assaults of the heretics and the xenos. Your words quail³⁶ under the yoke³⁷ of nightmare darkness. Speed me forth to the battle that I may smite³⁸ those that would bring ruin to your domain and slaughter your faithful servants”.

(Celestine sighing deeply)

Celestine: “I am lost, my Emperor, among these petty³⁹ ambitions of mortal concerns. You did not raise me up from the bosom⁴⁰ of death to parlay⁴¹ with self-serving clergy and corrupt dive canters⁴². I serve you as I think right and reserve no judgment for your will, but this is not my battlefield. I cannot find atonement⁴³ here. I beseech you, master...”

(Celestine having a vision)

Master of Mankind (growling): “Celestine, heed my words... Our doom cometh near...”

Voice 1: “He returns...”

Voice 2: “It rises... The storm breaks...”

Voice 3: “The eight-turned god awakens”.

Celestine: “I see it, lord of terror, a burning blue effigy⁴⁴ of death. The tower of the Ecclesiarchy tumbles⁴⁵. I hear it, my lord...”

(Celestine moaning in terror, falling to the ground)

Sister Superior (approaching Celestine): “Revered sister, what affliction⁴⁶ is this?”

Celestine: “No affliction, my sister, but a blessing. A vision from the God Emperor. Send word to the canoness that she must ready as many battle sisters as she can master. A terrible war is almost upon us”.

Sister Superior: “And what of you, revered sister?”

Celestine: “I must speak with Inquisitor Greyfax”.

(Celestine running away fast)

* * *

Longinus: “These attacks on the Ecclesiarch are only going to continue. But he’s ignored my warnings to withdraw from his public duties”.

Greyfax: “I do not understand why they continue, Centurion. If the aim was to hold his rescinding of the Decree Passive, they are too late. The speech is made, the deed under way”.

Longinus: “Perhaps, we are looking at events through the wrong lens. Maybe it isn’t about the Decree Passive at all”.

Greyfax: "We shall know more when I spend time with the prisoners captured by Celestine. I am close to grasping the truth, but those I have interrogated were misled, manipulated in some way and I sense a hidden hand behind their actions. The last has not regained consciousness yet, but we will have answers soon".

Longinus: "I hope that".

Celestine (from the distance): "Katarinya!"

(Celestine rapidly approaching)

Celestine (breathing hard): "Katarinya, Longinus".

Longinus: "You look perturbed⁴⁷, sister Celestine".

Celestine: "The God Emperor has sent me a fresh warning, a vision".

Greyfax: "Calm down, Celestine".

Celestine: "I cannot. It has filled me with terrible foreboding⁴⁸. I feel the flames even now, hear the crackles as it blackens my flesh".

Longinus: "What flames? What was this vision?"

Celestine: "A blue flame that consumes all, a fire sent by eight-turned god".

Greyfax: "That phrase was in the mind of the Alpha psyker on Terra. The eight-turned god".

Celestine: "Those very words, Katarinya".

Longinus: "The dark powers... Their servants are everywhere in these terrible times".

Greyfax: "Tell nobody else of this. Ophelia has not long recovered from the horrors of demonic invasion".

Celestine: "The Lord Ecclesiarch should know".

Greyfax: "Especially not Deacis. There is no way to tell how he would react, what oil he might accidentally pour on the flames even if he intended to do right. We will keep this among ourselves".

* * *

(Katarinya snoring while sleeping)

(beeping noise)

Greyfax (mumbling in her sleep): "Purging continues... I shall have my (yawning) stay my... out of my brain... star gods returning..."

(Greyfax waking up to another beeping noise, standing up, yawning again and going to the door)

Greyfax (opening the door): "Kyrillos, what..."

Kyrillos: "Quickly, Inquisitor! Come with me!"

Greyfax: "What do you want? I've had little enough rest of late".

Kyrillos: "We must hurry. I'll explain on the way".

Greyfax: "This has better be important. (clearing her throat) Why are you not going?"

Kyrillos: "Um, let me get you a robe".

Greyfax: "Um?"

(Kyrillos bringing a robe to Greyfax)

Kyrillos: "Better".

Greyfax (still half-asleep, putting on the robe): "Um..."

Kyrillos: "I couldn't vox you, Inquisitor. I didn't want to risk anyone picking up my transmission. The Ecclesiarch has ordered to this information not be shared with anyone outside his close circle".

Greyfax: "What information?"

Kyrillos: "I've just learned that several ships arrived through the warp some days ago. It is Marshal Gardhelm's Black Templars".

Greyfax: "I see".

Kyrillos: "They've come back to Ophelia and are demanding that the Ecclesiarch reinstates the Decree Passive and turns himself over to them for... The phrase used was 'grotesque heresies against the God Emperor'".

Greyfax (sarcastically): "Three hundred genetically engineered power-armored battle-hardened religious zealots. Great!"

Kyrillos: "Yes, Inquisitor, and they made planet fall ten minutes ago".

Greyfax: "That is exactly what this delicate situation needs right now".

* * *

Benedict: "The Ecclesiarch is not receiving visitors".

Greyfax: "Stand aside".

Benedict (insisting): "The Ecclesiarch is not receiving visitors".

Greyfax: "I am a member of the Emperor's Inquisitor. If you are in my way when I reach the top of these stairs, I will have you executed for treason".

Benedict: "I... I..."

Kyrillos: "Do as she says, Benedict!"

Benedict: "This is most unprecedented".

Kyrillos: "Be shocked later. Key in the code for Ecclesiarch's chambers now".

(Benedict entering the key, doors opening)

Gardhelm: "You must be reminded that my gunships and drop cascades are at the ready, Lord Ecclesiarch. I will not be thwarted in my... "

(Greyfax entering the chambers)

Gardhelm: "What is this?"

Deacis: "I said no interruptions, Benedict".

Benedict: "It is the Inquisitor, Lord Ecclesiarch".

Deacis: "Of course it is. This is a meeting of the inner Synod, Greyfax. Your timing is most inconvenient".

Greyfax: "The Inquisition does not operate at your convenience".

Deacis: "Huh, I shall remind you that I am the head of the Adeptus Ministorum and a High Lord of Terra. My influence is considerable. Do not let our recent familiarity cloud that fact".

Benedict: "And you come garbed in the robe of the Sorrowitas adept? Show some decorum⁴⁹, Inquisitor!"

Greyfax: "My apparel⁵⁰ is not your concern, cardinal Husheen. Kyrillos, close the door behind me".

(door closing)

Greyfax: "You must be Marshal Gardhelm. I am Inquisitor Greyfax".

Gardhelm: "I am Regis Gerald Gardhelm, Marshal of the Ophelia crusade, Black Templars Chapter of the Adeptus Astartes. You are Katarinya Greyfax, yes?"

Greyfax: "And you are responding to the recent attack?"

Gardhelm: "Attack? I don't know of any attack. I received word from the High Marshal to return to Ophelia VII by request of the Inquisitorial representative lord Trevayne. It seems the Ecclesiarch wishes to raise armies and the lesson taught by my predecessors 4000 years ago has been forgotten".

Deacis: "Huh, you have no right to interfere, Marshal. Even with the backing of Lord Trevayne and comparing me to the tyrant Goge Vandire is further insult".

Gardhelm: "You haven't answered my demands, Ecclesiarch. You must issue a proclamation restoring the Decree Passive, release yourself to my custody⁵¹ for immediate transportation to Terra pending⁵² lord Trevayne's investigation".

Benedict: "Nonsense, the Adeptus Ministorum does not answer to the judgment of the Space Marines".

Greyfax: "But the authority of the Inquisition is absolute, cardinal. However, I do not think removing the Ecclesiarch to Terra at this point is conducive⁵³ to the security of the High Lord or his organization".

Gardhelm: "You work at cross-purposes⁵⁴ with lord Trevayne".

Greyfax: "Perhaps, but I have been following evidence of a growing conspiracy close to the Ecclesiarch. For those purposes and his continuing safety lord Deacis will remain on Ophelia VII for the time being".

(siren going off)

Gardhelm: "Your orbital defenses have locked onto my ships".

Black Templar (over vox): "Ships on intercept course, my lord. What are your orders?"

Gardhelm: "Why are Adepta Sorrowitas' cruisers inbound on my position?"

Kyrillos (over vox): "I must speak with you, Inquisitor".

Deacis: "An overreaction, I am sure".

(Gardhelm grabbing the pistol)

Greyfax: "Marshal, disarm your plasma pistol. Do not escalate the situation further. Ecclesiarch, send word for your battle sisters to keep their distance. Marshal Gardhelm, have your ships remain on station and take no further action".

Deacis (laughing): "I am not some lackey, Greyfax, to be ordered around".

Gardhelm: "My warriors and I will defend ourselves".

Kyrillos (over vox): "It is very urgent".

Greyfax: "I am an Inquisitor. I swear by the Throne on Terra that if either of you tax⁵⁵ me further, I will have both of you declared Excommunicate Traitoris and will erase every mention of you from existence before turning you to ashes and ejecting them into the void between stars. Ecclesiarch, you will remain under house arrest in these chambers overseen by members of the Adeptus Arbites answering to me personally. Would that satisfy you for the moment, Marshal?"

Benedict: "This is an imposition⁵⁶ too far, Inquisitor".

Another Cardinal: "I concur⁵⁷, this impudence⁵⁸..."

Greyfax (using psyker abilities and ordering the cardinals): "Be quiet".

Gardhelm: "It is an acceptable temporary measure if the battle sisters do not encroach⁵⁹ further into our vicinity⁶⁰. I would not wish to impede the holy works of the Inquisition".

Deacis: "I accept your conditions, Inquisitor. I have no desire to make this situation worse. Arrangements will be made".

Greyfax: "Good. Marshal, I will update you privately on the situation, if you are agreeable".

Gardhelm: "I await your signal, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "I will also be discussing this matter in much greater detail with you, Ecclesiarch. First, I must attend another matter".

(Greyfax leaving the chambers)

Cardinals (angrily, in the distance): "Holy Terra!"

Kyrillos: "The last of the prisoners has woken, Katarinya. She is being prepared for interrogation".

* * *

Greyfax: "I didn't think to see you frequenting these grizzly⁶¹ low levels, sister Celestine".

Celestine: "How so?"

Greyfax: "Being a shining angel upon a far flung battlefield is a very different matter to applying a heated brand in a blood-stained cell far from the light of any sun. Are you sure this is the destiny the God Emperor has ordained⁶² for you?"

Celestine: "I am..."

Greyfax (interrupting): "For that matter why are you still on Ophelia VII? Is there not a war zone where you should be leading the faithful into the guns of their foes?"

(prisoner screaming in the distance from evident pain)

Celestine (smiling): "Hahaha, your cynicism does not wound me, Katarinya. It invigorates⁶³ me. Faith must be continually tested if it is of value. You said so yourself not long ago. I remain here because I have not yet fulfilled whatever destiny the Emperor has set aside for me. His guidance brought me to the Ecclesiarch, but the matter is not concluded. So I will remain until it is".

Greyfax: "How will you know when you have completed that mission?"

Celestine: "I always know. There is peace, for an instant I know peace".

(prisoner screaming in the distance)

Celestine: "That is why I am here, to find that moment. It might be in the confession of one of these sinners or something else entirely".

(Celestine and Greyfax entering the interrogation room)

(enchained Hermida moaning)

Greyfax: "Hermida, I am Inquisitor Greyfax, the last face you will see in your mortal life".

(doors closing behind Celestine and Greyfax with a bang)

Hermida: "Get that cursed witch away from me".

Greyfax: "The Living Saint? No! She stays".

Celestine: "If my presence discomforts you so, perhaps it is the light I shine into the shadows of your tortured soul".

Hermida: "I shall remain pure".

Greyfax: "I see that Antilios has completed the preliminaries, just a few additives to your blood to increase your fear responses, perk up⁶⁴ the nerve endings, keep you conscious once the excruciation⁶⁵ begins".

Hermida: "Your threats..."

Greyfax (interrupting coldly): "These are not threats... This statement is a fact. Antilios is not one of my people. He works for the Ecclesiarch, well, someone down the chain of authority from the Ecclesiarch himself, more in a lay capacity, but you understand what I mean".

Hermida: "Why are you telling me this?"

Greyfax: "Antilios believes he can save your soul, while I am only interested in the truth. Whatever you tell me, it will not stop the agony he will inflict upon you. Only a repentance⁶⁶ of sin can do that, but that is not why I am here".

Hermida: "I will tell you nothing, protector of the false prophet".

Greyfax (taking out her blade): "Quaint⁶⁷, well I am no opponent of physical excruciation, I understand clearly its limitations. I also have other more effective means at my disposal. I want you to understand that I could have half

your skin flayed off, your finger bones split apart and your ribs snapped⁶⁸ one by one. But I have no desire to do so”.

Hermida: “I will tell that witch nothing. The cursed saint will die the same as the false Ecclesiarch as she has set her throne in the shadow of heresy and will burn with all the other deluded⁶⁹ traitors”.

Celestine: “Unburden your soul before the God Emperor and move into his light with your confession”.

Greyfax: “Unlike Antilios who I think displays just a little too much affection for his work to be merely professionally interested, I take no enjoyment from what will happen. I am concerned with results. That is why you need to know that I have extracted everything from your coconspirators already. You’ll have no secrets to keep”.

Hermida: “You are just... You think I am stupid enough to fall for that trick?”

Celestine: “Unburden yourself of your guilt and your end will be swift”.

Greyfax: “I do not need tricks. I certainly do not consider you to be stupid. It is because I think that you can make an intelligent informed decision to cooperate that I am giving you this opportunity. Tell me if I am wrong. Your companions – Nikos and the others – told me that you came up with this plan to kill Deacis. You acquired some of the stores needed while Sharith and Mondatra came up with the ideal opportunity”.

Celestine: “You thought you would be martyrs. None of you expected to survive. None of you wanted to survive”.

Hermida (nervous): “Oh...Oh...”

Greyfax: “Your expression tells me exactly why that would be the case. I too would want to wish to avoid the fate in store for you”.

Hermida: “I don’t know anything more than Nikos. He was the leader”.

Greyfax: “Really? That is not true, is it, Hermida? There was another, one that did not take part in the attack. Nobody seems to remember him, but he is there all the same”.

Hermida: “What man?”

Celestine: “What is this? There was none that escaped me”.

Greyfax: “The one that hides in the shadows of your mind”.

Hermida: “There was no one else, I swear”.

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): “Tell me about San Leor!”

Hermida: “San Leor? What? Who is San Leor?”

Celestine: “What is important about the mother world? What have you not told me?”

Greyfax: “I am not interested in giving you conciliation⁷⁰, Hermida, but you should know that the others said almost exactly the same. There was nothing you could do to avoid this”.

Hermida: "Avoid?"

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "See the man in the shadows!"

Hermida (sobbing): "The Emperor will protect me! I am strong in my faith".

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "See the man in the shadows!"

Hermida (screaming): "Ah! Oh! There are nails in my head piercing deep! Take them out!"

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "See the man in the shadows!"

Hermida (sobbing): "The Emperor... The Em.... Shadows... Shadows in my thoughts..."

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "The fire shall burn away the shadows. See his face by the light of the cleansing flame! See him!"

Hermida: "Tatters⁷¹ of my soul, stop it! Stop! Stop! Nothing to see! Burn! Thoughts burning... He is here".

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "Look at him! See his face".

Hermida: "Shadows everywhere, I hear him. The truth shall be known. Deacis's blood shall be the river".

(barrier breaking, Hermida's thoughts turning to male voice)

Kultza: "That washes in the new era of faith... When I am gone, you will ensure that the blasphemer does not enjoy the fruits of the rotted tree he has planted. Cut him down and I will tear up the roots of this infamy⁷²".

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "What else? What else did he say?"

Kultza: "This is the will of the Emperor, our prophet of the eight-turned god. By his hand and word are you guided to this righteous act. Remember not his servant, the messenger, but know only the light of his truth and the message. I am not the light, I am but the shadow cast by its presence. You are the faithful and shall know paradise by his side".

Hermida: "See me not! Hear me not!"

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "Tell me about San Leor! What is the eight-turned god? Who else serves the eight-turned god?"

(Hermida weeping, Katarinya losing contact)

Greyfax: "I saw a face, one of the cardinals... Kultza".

Hermida: "No! The God Emperor willed it".

Greyfax: "If you fools profess⁷³ to know the Emperor's will, the likes on Antilios would become redundant⁷⁴. Why must we lay on mistakes upon the Master of Mankind and not admit to them being a creation of our weakness?"

(Hermida mumbling a prayer)

Greyfax: "What was that?"

Hermida: "I shall be born again forever in his light. I shall know no pain".

Greyfax: "Pathetic, Antilios will show you the lie of that".

Celestine: "No, she has confessed. She has earned absolution⁷⁵".

Greyfax (unsheathing her blade): "You defy me?"

Hermida: "You will burn in the abyss, you and holy..."

(Greyfax slicing Hermida's throat)

Celestine (menacing): "I am the blade of God-Emperor, Katarinya. Never forget that".

(Celestine walking away from the interrogation room)

(door closing with a bang)

* * *

Kyrillos (breathing hard): "I came as soon as I could, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "Hermida's confessions confirm the heresies of cardinal Kultza, Kyrillos. Where is he now?"

Kyrillos: "He was due to ascend to orbit last night, but unfortunately for him his entourage's shuttle was wrongly marked for immediate maintenance inspection. It will be several more hours until the tech-priests have finished reconsecrating its engines and systems".

Greyfax: "Unfortunate for him, but fortunate for us".

Kyrillos: "If you call a sleepless night of freezing cold rendezvous in the upper towers and a month's wine allocation in bribes fortunate... I thought it wise to delay his departure given your suspicions. You'll find him in the cloister of Saint Margetia completing the service of the second act of journeying with some of his colleagues".

Greyfax: "Lead the way".

* * *

Kultza (praying): "Imperius Dominatus Victorius! With this blessed oil I anoint upon the second act of sacrament and seal thy soul to the God Emperor as your service seals your body to him".

Kyrillos (whispering): "That's Kultza".

(Greyfax using psyker's abilities to enter Kultza's thoughts)

Kultza (thinking): "Find out who sabotaged my shuttle. Damn, that Inquisitor is here. What does she want? I knew those idiots would attack too soon".

Kultza (praying): "We offer up our prayers to the God Emperor at this time in return for the safe passage through the sea of souls. May his light burn forever in the sight of the blessed navigators and may the tides of the Empyrean swiftly bring us to our homes again".

Greyfax: "Cardinal Kultza! I have questions for you".

Kultza (thinking): "Stay calm, she knows nothing. Say nothing".

(Greyfax approaching the cardinal)

Kultza: "You are interrupting a holy liturgy, Inquisitor Greyfax. Can this not wait until I have returned to my chambers?"

Greyfax: "I will speak with you now, cardinal!"

Benedict: "Kultza is right, this intersession is blasphemous".

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "Perhaps I would have a word with you as well".

Benedict: "Well, that's not".

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "All of you, remain where you are".

Kultza (thinking): "She does know, by the eight-turned god, she has found out".

Kultza: "Let us not be hasty, Inquisitor. I am sure..."

Greyfax (interrupting): "Enough with your lies and posturing⁷⁷".

Kultza (thinking): "The crooked path has ended, but I will not be taken. They cannot find out about San Leor. Just one flick of my thumb..."

Greyfax (crying): "Everyone, get down!"

(Kultza exploding, committing a suicide)

(Kyrillos moaning, Greyfax coughing)

Kyrillos: "Inquisitor, are you all right?"

Greyfax: "I am unhurt, you?"

Kyrillos: "Unharmmed... Thanks to your warning".

Greyfax: "We'll earn nothing more from him".

Benedict (moaning): "Emperor's mercy... What did you do to him, Greyfax?"

Greyfax: "It is what I will do to you that should be your highest concern, cardinal. All of you are now co-conspirators of this traitor and will be interrogated and processed accordingly. If you have anything to confess, you would be wise to do so now to avoid needless excruciation".

Cardinals: "...in the Emperor's name..."

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "Cease the prattling⁷⁸!"

Benedict: "We are innocent of any crimes".

Greyfax: "That is highly unlikely, but we shall see if your transgressions are of any importance. Kyrillos, send for a squad of Battle Sisters to escort their Holinesses to suitable containment".

Kyrillos: "Yes, Inquisitor. What next? It looks like the trail ends in Kultza's scattered remains".

Greyfax: "You are so dull-witted, Kyrillos. The path to the truth is never straightforward. Even had he lived Kultza was not the end of this drama".

Kyrillos: "Perhaps, it's time to return to Terra".

Greyfax: "To return to your master, perhaps?"

Kyrillos: "I don't know what you mean, Inquisitor. Anyway I'll fetch those battle sisters".

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "Stay where you are, spy!"

(Kyrillos breathing hard in fear)

Kyrillos: "Inquisitor? Yes, I am your spy".

Greyfax: "How did you know that Trevayne dispatched the Black Templars? That knowledge was only divulged⁷⁹ by the Marshal while you remained outside the chamber".

Kyrillos: "If I deny it you'll just rip it from my thoughts anyway, won't you?"

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "When did he turn you?"

Kyrillos: "Eh... Eh... He never did, if you mean that I betrayed your interests".

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "Speak swiftly or you will die".

Kyrillos: "Ah... He... He discovered my engagement in the Ecclesiarchy for you and insisted that I shared with him exactly what I passed to you. I never told him anything else. That's how I knew about the Inquisitor Lord's intent to hire an assassin".

Greyfax: "He would have assumed you would inform me of the plot, what would be the point?"

Kyrillos: "I don't know. Perhaps, getting your support or opposition for his move? To get you involved with the Ecclesiarch without having to request it himself?"

Greyfax: "That's a lie... As Inquisitorial representative he wanted to keep his hands clean while he reported to the Senatorum Imperialis. He could say that no Inquisitor was assigned to the investigation. I involved myself and he might have tried to pin⁸⁰ the assassination on me too".

Kyrillos (mumbling): "Wh... What? What do you intend for me?"

Greyfax: "I intend for you to remain with the Ecclesiarch and carry on informing me of what he does whilst under house arrest".

Kyrillos: "You still trust me?"

Greyfax: "Do not be ridiculous. I have never trusted you, hive scum. If I could buy you so easily, anyone could. It is a relief to know it is Lord Trevayne and not some worse radical that you serve".

Kyrillos: "And what am I to tell Lord Trevayne?"

Greyfax: "The truth. Now that I know of your association he may wish to break the relationship. If not continue as you are, I have nothing to hide from the Inquisitor Lord".

Kyrillos: "What is your command, Inquisitor?"

Greyfax: "Do whatever it is you need to do to make sure you stay among Deacis's staff during his internment. Keep anything from me again, Kyrillos, and we will not be having a conversation. Your life hangs by a slender thread only due to your past service".

Kyrillos (sobbing): "Thank you, Inquisitor".

Greyfax (menacing): "Do not thank me. There are many that would wish Deacis dead and I want you at his side always. Do not make any long term plans".

* * *

Greyfax: "Shut the door, Centurion, please. I would have no ears other than those present to hear what we are about to discuss".

(Longinus slowly walking and closing the door)

Longinus: "We are alone and unmonitored".

Celestine: "That is why you have brought us to this abandoned chapelry? For privacy?"

Gardhelm: "Speak plainly, Greyfax. I do not have the temperament for your clandestine machinations. Why have you brought us all here?"

Greyfax: "Cardinal Kultza was the architect of much of the troubles we have witnessed, but not its creator. Sister Celestine, tell me more about the vision".

Celestine: "I have prayed to seek the truth of it and I believe my purpose has been revealed to me. I think you were right, Katarinya. War is upon us and I am destined for battle".

Greyfax: "The Imperium's constant existence is one of unending war. You need to be more specific".

Celestine: "I saw a great flame of destruction engulf the Imperial church".

Greyfax: "That flame is not a schism, but the influence of the dark powers. We are all privy to certain specific protected knowledge. The Black Templars helped purge Ophelia VII of warp influence. Longinus, you were right when you said that this may not be about the Decree Passive".

Longinus: "Your investigation began on Gallant V, a world with very slender connections to the Ecclesiarchy. A conspiracy purely from within seemed unlikely".

Greyfax: "The only link we have between Kultza's proxy attack and the first assassination attempt on the Ecclesiarch is a title. From both parties I detected mention of the eight-turned god".

Celestine: "I witnessed the confessions of those I fought. They made no mention of such a false deity".

Greyfax: "Because they remember nothing of it. Cardinal Kultza psychically manipulated them".

Longinus: "Kultza was a psyker? That explains a great deal".

Gardhelm: "Including his corruption of purpose".

Greyfax: "Of course, psykers, especially ones with such mind-controlling abilities, rise to positions of power across the Imperium. It is why we must always be vigilant".

Celestine: "And what do you know of the eight-turned god?"

Greyfax: "Nothing, but I know where to look for more. Kultza was connected to San Leor".

Celestine: "There is a pattern in the anarchy. San Leor was home to the daughters of the Emperor whom Goge Vandire turned into his brides of the

Emperor. The Decree Passive granted power to them as the Adepta Sorrowitas and with its revocation⁸² we are drawn again to the world where our sisterhood was founded”.

Longinus: “A world beset by a raging warp storm? That is where you are going?”

Gardhelm: “Lord Trevayne desired that I bring the Ecclesiarch to him, but this dark cult is a greater threat. My crusade will break the storm with you. The Black Templars do not lack the courage to face the unknown, Custodian”.

Longinus: “Your taunts have no effect on me, Marshal. That said I will join you to see the matter to its conclusion”.

Celestine: “You will not travel all alone. The Order of Our Martyred Lady is mobilizing. (unsheathing her sword) This is no longer a battle to protect the Ecclesiarch. It is a holy war. It is the right and the duty of the battle sisters to prosecute this war, a war to reclaim the mother world of the sisterhood”.

OUR MARTYRED LADY – FAITH ENDURES (2019)

Written by Gav Thorpe

Performed by Catherine Tate, Emma Gregory, Ramon Tikaram, Toby Longworth, Clara Mendonca, Andrew Fettes and Steve Conlin

Scripted by Reverend

LIST OF CHARACTERS:

- * Inquisitor Katarinya Greyfax
- * Celestine, the Living Saint
- * Marshal Gardhelm
- * Custodian Longinus
- * Demon Prince
- * Sabrina, canoness of the Order of Our Martyred Lady
- * sisters Resunda, Lesia

Servitor: “Severe navigation anomaly warning! Brace for warp turbulence”.

Gardhelm: “As I warned the San Leor is wholly enveloped by warp storms. Did you think this is the first time Emperor’s servants strive to breach the storm, Inquisitor Greyfax? The crusades of the Black Templars have attempted several times to bring the shrine world of San Leor back under the Imperial control”

Greyfax: "So it seems, Marshal Gardhelm. Even so we have solid evidence that cardinal Kultza dispatched troop ships to the system. He would have known about the storm so he must also have known of some way through it".

(Celestine entering the chambers)

Gardhelm: "Sister Celestine, what news from the Order of Our Martyred Lady?"

Celestine: "The fleet from the Convent Sanctorum is beset¹, unable to penetrate the storms".

Greyfax: "Celestine, this is where sister Sabrina was lost as she made pilgrimage to San Leor. Is there anything you remember of the incident that might show us some way through".

Celestine: "I know nothing more of sister Sabrina's fate than is recorded at Ophelia and no doubt those records are well-known to the Inquisition".

Greyfax: "The cardinal has been turned by the infernal powers. Perhaps he was privy to some darker means to gain passage through the warp storms. If he possessed undisclosed psychic powers, is it possible that others of sorcerous ability traveled with the fleet and bargained a way through?"

Gardhelm: "I reviewed your assessment of the cardinal's forces, Inquisitor, to gain some insight of the likely foes we will face here, as well as his planetary defense troops. You mentioned that he had access to storm troopers of the Tempestus Scions".

Greyfax: "That is correct. They are trained by Schola Progenium and so were likely corrupted by allies of Kultza. What of it?"

Gardhelm: "The cardinal was a false servant. How far has the corruption stretched through the Ecclesiarchy and the Atromesta sector? The navigators, the astropaths, the Department Munitorum even? Our strength would better be deployed combating the threat at its source rather than trying to gain entry to a system lost for a century".

Greyfax: "A battle for a future day, Marshal".

(Gardhelm gasping)

Greyfax: "The link is not Atromesta, it is Ophelia VII. Thankfully there is nothing in my investigation to suggest that Ecclesiarch Deacis is complicit in any darker plot, simply encouraged by others including cardinal Kultza. The cardinal's attempts to keep our attention on Ophelia VII were intended to mask his own activities, most pertinent² of which was dispatching troops to this system several months ago".

(Longinus entering the chamber)

Gardhelm: "Ah, Centurion Longinus! I hope you are already aware of the situation".

Longinus: "I am".

Gardhelm: "What is your intent?"

Longinus: "We cannot long remain on station at the edge of this storm. The more time we spend here, the greater the danger we will be swept away or worse".

Gardhelm: "I am willing to attempt the transition if you desire it, Inquisitor. Even if we are successful, we are likely to lose ships in the process, either destroyed or scattered across the warp tides".

Greyfax: "Not for the moment, Marshal. We shall wait for the rest of the fleet to arrive. If we are to break through to San Leor we must do it with our full strength, not a handful of ships at a time. I will consult with my texts and try to think of some way to breach the storms".

Longinus: "Our foes are in league with the powers of the warp. I don't think it will too long before we draw their gaze. It would be too much to suppose that your friends from the Aeldari craft worlds could borrow us a route to San Leor as they helped you escape from the wrath of the Despoiler".

Greyfax: "They are no friends of mine, allies of temporary convenience, nothing more".

Celestine: "I would not wish to deal any more with the Aeldari, Centurion. We have ills and enemies enough at present".

Longinus: "Then let's hope you find something in those texts before we are attacked again as we were when we departed Terra. I don't think we could resist such assaults for long in the heart of a warp storm".

Greyfax: "I shall be in my chambers trying to find a solution if anyone has any suggestions".

(Greyfax leaving the chambers)

* * *

Longinus: "Greyfax! I want to speak with you".

Greyfax: "You have until I reach my chambers on the deck below. Be sure it is a worthwhile use of my time, Centurion Longinus".

Longinus: "During the three weeks since we left Ophelia VII I have been analyzing the reports you passed to me regarding recent events. My thanks for providing this intelligence".

Greyfax: "You have shown me what the Custodians are capable of, Centurion. And you are perhaps the only Imperial organization I trust without question".

Longinus: "Do you not trust your own Inquisition?"

Greyfax: "Certainly not. Inquisitors constantly walk the edge of the precipice3 staring down into depths that would break the souls of lesser folk. A few jump in. We must always be watchful, but the Custodians, your kind, were made by the Emperor himself to be loyal. You can no more turn on him than carve out your own lungs".

Longinus: "I am grateful for your confidence, Inquisitor, and your indulgence⁴. I believe the link you have drawn between Ophelia VII and our destination San Leor is credible if a little tenuous⁵. The involvement of cardinal Kultza in the second attempted assassination of the Ecclesiarch and sending ships to the San Leor system is worthy of investigation".

Greyfax: "So glad, that you approve".

Longinus: "However I don't see a link between Kultza and the explosion that destroyed the cathedral of the Emperor's ascension on Terra. If the intent of the assassin was to slay Deacis before he announced the dissolution of the Decree Passive it would be in contradiction to Kultza's public and private support of raising a new Frateris Templars force. I can't reconcile⁶ the renegade cardinal's actions to the events on Terra".

Greyfax: "It is a dichotomy⁷, yes. I cannot do anything more than speculate, but I detected both the assassin and the cardinal thinking of a phrase before they died. The eight-turned god".

Longinus: "So you said".

Greyfax: "From what Kyrillos has told me, Kultza was well placed to succeed Deacis if anything went amiss, particularly as nearly all of the Terra's Synod was wiped out at the same time as Deacis would have died".

Longinus: "What of it?"

Greyfax: "I would say that the original intention was for Kultza to become Ecclesiarch after Deacis and enact the revocation of the Decree Passive. It would seem as though he was following his predecessor's wishes and deflect attention whilst giving him access to High Lords of Terra".

Longinus: "A chilling thought. A man with the powers that Kultza possessed to be able to influence the minds of others and remove the memory of it. It would have been a terrible threat to the Senatorum Imperialis. We can be thankful his plot has been thwarted".

Greyfax: "Not yet thwarted though the man is dead. I am not convinced that he was the prime instigator. There is still the matter of San Leor. I cannot see the pattern that connects them all yet, but I am sure it exists".

Longinus: "I admit I'd hoped for other more insight given that we currently accompany a crusade of Black Templars, twenty companies of battle sisters and the warships to carry them. A large force sitting idle maybe just what the enemy wants. Has it occurred to you that the intelligence regarding San Leor might be a falsehood intended to lead your attention away from Ophelia VII?"

Greyfax: "That would mean Kultza or whoever he is working with or for thought that he might be compromised and so prepared a false trail beforehand detailing the fleet leaving for San Leor. I have encountered some complex plots

in my time, but such convolutions⁸ seem not only unnecessary but highly unlikely”.

Longinus: “But then perhaps I might suggest another scenario. Kultza dispatched loyal troops to San Leor in the hope of reclaiming the system for the Ecclesiarchy thus cementing his attempt to become Ecclesiarch. He did after all ordered their departure before the assassination attempt on Terra”.

Greyfax: “In his last thoughts Kultza wondered if I knew about San Leor. It was his first concern upon seeing me. Whatever his intent the answers will be found at San Leor and given that the system been wrapped for decades by a warp storm I am not prepared to go into battle there under strength. I am beginning to think that I do not have your full confidence, Centurion”.

Longinus: “As you said some Inquisitors stare into the abyss, others fall in. I am concerned that your entanglement⁹ with the Living Saint affects your judgment”.

(Greyfax keying the door)

Greyfax: “Fortunately your concerns matter little, Custodian. Do not mistake my relationship with Celestine for friendship. The opposite is true, I do not trust her, nor these visions she claims the Emperor sends her. Surely you do not share this misguided faith in your master’s godhood”.

(Greyfax opening the door)

Longinus: “I’ve been a member of the Hetaeron Guard three times in my long service, three times as one of Companions of the Emperor. My armor is blackened from proximity to the emanations of the Golden Throne and we changed the guard every hundred years, such is the psychic pressure that pounds upon our minds for the duration. A few have their thoughts burned out entirely by the experience. Over my long life I have spent three hundred years in the direct presence of the Emperor and I will tell you that there is a broad gulf between psychically powerful and deity. But I do not know where I would draw the line, nor which side of it I will place the Master of Mankind”.

Greyfax: “You would call him God Emperor?”

Longinus: “I speak not of theology, Inquisitor, but personal bias¹⁰. You are suspicious of their faith and so you are damning of everything the Ecclesiarchy does”.

Greyfax: “I am an Inquisitor of the Ordo Hereticus. It is my purpose to scrutinize¹¹ the Imperial church”.

Longinus: “It is more than that. You dislike and distrust sister Celestine so you extend your suspicion to all that is around her. If you find some corruption at San Leor, a darkness in the hearts of the Adepta Sorrowitas, the birthplace of the sisterhood, you will confirm your doubts about the Living Saint. When an Inquisitor expects heresy, then he’ll always find it one way or another”.

Greyfax: "An Inquisitor has the right to define heresy, a true threat to the Emperor and the Imperium. If you attempt to interfere with my mission, I will not hesitate in condemning you also".

Longinus: "Be careful, Inquisitor. Your list of allies grows short".

Greyfax (closing the door behind her): "Ah".

* * *

Greyfax (moaning while sleeping): "... abomination... oh... corruption... your reckoning is overdue... no... you corrupted me... as you did Valeria"

(Trazyn laughing in the distance)

(Greyfax waking up with a sigh)

Greyfax: "Damn warp dreams!"

* * *

(Celestine recollecting the events on Cadia during her sleep)

(Demon-Prince Urkanthos laughing)

Imperial Guardsman: Die, abomination!"

(Urkanthos killing the assailant with ease)

Urkanthos (laughing hysterically): "Ahahahha, the corpse bride..."

Celestine (flying over the battlefield): "Your hour is done, beast!"

(Urkanthos laughing)

Urkanthos: "Ahahaha, it has only just begun! You are nothing, the echo of a false god. I will break you in half and set your skull upon Khorne's throne".

(Celestine charging with a sword)

(Urkanthos crying)

Urkanthos: "I am the scourge¹² master of the Black Fleet, the right hand of the Despoiler. You cannot match me alone".

(Demon charging)

Genevieve: "Celestine!"

Eleanor: "Celestine!"

Celestine: "I am not alone and your hour is done!"

(Celestine and Urkanthos clashing sword and talons)

(angelic singing)

(buzzing sound awaking Celestine)

Greyfax (behind the door): "Celestine!"

Celestine (yawning): "Open door!"

(door opening)

Celestine: "Greyfax?"

Greyfax: "You did not answer your vox".

Celestine (standing from her bed and yawning): "I was... Eh... resting".

Greyfax: "You look disturbed, Celestine. Was it another vision?"

Celestine: "Not the future, but a memory. Warp dreams recalling when my faith raised my sisters from the realm of the dead".

Greyfax: "The one killed on Cadia? Genevieve and Eleanor?"

Celestine: "My Geminae Superia. The Demon Prince would have slain me as well had they not been returned by the will of the God Emperor. It was their faith in life that burned in their souls that allowed them to return".

Greyfax: "There are other dark powers that play with life and death".

Celestine (sighing): "Ah, and we have been brought back to the place where it all started, the mother world of the sisterhood, San Leor. This is where the daughters of the Emperor first chose to take up blade and a gun in praise of the Master of Mankind. The first of the Sisters of Battle".

Greyfax: "But do not forget the twisted road that led from that time to the founding of the Orders Militant. It took a tyrant to create you, a heretic that wore the dual crowns of Ecclesiarch and Master of the Administratum, plucked your predecessors from obscurity and raised them up to an army".

Celestine: "He tricked them with technology they had never seen, pretending he could perform miracles. Vandire tried to corrupt them, but the Emperor would not have his daughters turned against him. It was through the Emperor's strength and the blade of a sister that Vandire was overthrown".

Greyfax: "Many are the deceptions of the enemy, Celestine. Like Kultza, the most dangerous ones hide right before us".

Celestine: "Yes, we must remain vigilant to the possibility that such manipulation might occur again. I am a Living Saint and answer to the God Emperor's will, not any human agency. The sisterhood must look to me as an example, to stay aloof¹³ from the politics of the Ecclesiarchy and true to the ideals of the daughters of the Emperor. I am the blade of the God Emperor and his foes shall fall before us".

Greyfax: "Which brings me to the reason for my visit. I have asked to meet with Longinus and Gardhelm. I know how to reach San Leor".

* * *

Gardhelm: "Inquisitor, you said you had a way we could break through the storm around San Leor".

Greyfax: "Perhaps, Marshal. Longinus, you reminded me of an instant that occurred as we left Sol. We were beset by demonic attacks swirling the warp around us".

Longinus: "I remember, Celestine acted as a focus for the navigators creating a beacon for them to follow".

Greyfax: "Sister Celestine, can you make a way to San Leor?"

Celestine: "I might be able to, Katarinya. Ophelia teams with billions of the faithful connecting to a less populous world like San Leor might not be possible.

That said, San Leor is the mother world of the sisterhood steeped¹⁴ in the souls of my predecessors and the spirit of the God Emperor”.

Gardhelm: “It sounds like you would risk my whole crusade on a slender hope”.

Celestine: “Not hope, Marshal, faith. I do not know if I can open a way but it is our duty to explore every option. I do not believe the Emperor has guided us here just to be thwarted by a storm”.

Black Templar (over vox): “Marshal, we have arrival confirmation from the Majestic Light”.

Gardhelm: “Acknowledged. That’s the last of the battle sisters’ ships, just one of mine left to arrive”.

Longinus: “Let me get this right. We are going to attempt a forced breach of the storm?”

Greyfax: “You saw what was possible when we departed for Ophelia VII”.

Longinus: “Hm...”

Celestine: “The faith of the Battle Sisters that have come from the Order of Our Martyred Lady will help. Marshal, would you and your warriors be willing to join me in prayer?”

Gardhelm: “We may share your faith in the God Emperor, but we are not servants of the Ecclesiarchy. We follow our own code”.

Celestine: “Your faith in the God Emperor is all I need, Marshal, and your trust”.

Gardhelm (sighing and tapping his fingers over the table): “Hm... Very well... You shall have it”.

Celestine: “We will have to establish a fleet wide vox link and I will require a chamber from which to address the faithful”.

Longinus: “How is this going to work in practice?”

Celestine: “We shall call upon the God Emperor to part the storms that bar entry to San Leor. When they have broken I shall give the word and the fleet will simultaneously engage their warp engines to jump back to real space”.

Black Templar (over vox): “Navigators report, Marshal”.

Gardhelm: “Yes?”

Black Templar (over vox): “Detecting ship’s wake aft¹⁵, Marshal. Probably, the Sword of Reckoning, also a counter-cyclonic movement has developed in the warp storm ahead”.

Gardhelm: “Elaborate!”

Black Templar (over vox): “Part of the warp storm seems to detaching to move towards us”.

Gardhelm: “Acknowledged. By the Throne, it feels like we are pushing against a constant tide of misfortune”.

Celestine: “The righteous path is never straight nor even, Marshal”.

Greyfax: "We cannot afford to be drawn into the warp storm. It is time to make the attempt or withdraw".

Longinus: "I see a mass transition through an unstable warp breach. That is definitely a plan".

Greyfax: "You have an alternative, Centurion?"

Longinus: "Not yet".

Gardhelm: "You may use my personal chapel, sister Celestine".

Celestine: "An honor for which you have my deepest thanks. I shall begin our preparations. Can all be in order in one hour?"

Gardhelm: "It shall be".

(Gardhelm and Greyfax leaving)

Gardhelm: "Do you really think she has the power to part this demonic veil?"

Greyfax: "Why ask me? You are the one that claims to have faith".

* * *

Greyfax (entering her chambers): "Servitor, enforce communication silence and bar entry protocols for the next thirty minutes".

Servitor: "As commanded, Inquisitor".

Greyfax (taking a seat): "Time to find out exactly what is guarding this world. Blessed or not Celestine must not be distracted for an instant. She has strength and courage but she is not untouchable. And if you really are a divinity, our Emperor, I would be grateful if you saw fit to enact a miracle on our behalf". Show yourselves".

(weird noises)

Greyfax: "Geller field is intact. Let us see what is beyond".

(Greyfax using her psyker abilities)

(Greyfax swimming in the ocean of Immaterium)

(thunder and lightning)

(distant demonic laughter)

* * *

(Celestine and Gardhelm treading towards the chapel)

Celestine: "Thank you, Marshal Gardhelm".

Gardhelm: "The fleet wide vox link is ready at your word, sister Celestine. My brethren are gathered in preparation for your prayer".

Celestine: "Good, please activate the vox now".

(Celestine and Gardhelm entering the chapel)

Celestine: "Through us the will of the God Emperor will be done".

Gardhelm: "Our faith is his blade".

Celestine: "And I shall wield it in his name. Let us first spend a moment to praise the Emperor for guiding us to this place. Without the light of

Astronomicon to pierce the veil of the warp humanity would be stranded16

amid the darkness of the stars. It is through his sacrifice and will that the void is tamed”.

Gardhelm: “Praise the Emperor”.

Celestine: “We pray for those souls given unto the Emperor that this light may burn bright across the galaxy. As we pray for all of those who labor beneath his gaze and give off their lives to his wars so that we can overcome a host of sinful foes”.

Gardhelm: “Praise the Emperor”.

Celestine: “We pray for those that raise gun and blade in defense of the Emperor’s realm for in them is the Emperor’s strength given life, his purpose given vitality”.

Gardhelm: “Praise the Emperor”.

* * *

Voices (in the distance): “Praise the Emperor”.

Greyfax: “I see you, denizen! I feel your formless breath upon my neck. This world does not belong to you. I am no navigator, but I am also not blind. Show yourself!”

(thunder crackling)

Greater Demon (erupting in laughter): “Hahaha! This world is ours! We took it! It belongs to us!”

Greyfax: “You cannot bar the righteous!”

Greater Demon (erupting in laughter): “Hahaha! You have a puppet of the corpse god. This is a prison for the righteous. Hahaha!”

* * *

Celestine: “We give thanks to the Emperor for giving us his strength so that we might fight in his name and for bringing us to the foe that we shall smite them in his name”.

Gardhelm: “Praise the Emperor”.

Celestine: “From him springs our faith, into us pours his resolve¹⁷. Through us his will is done. Without him we are nothing”.

Gardhelm: “We are nothing. Praise the Emperor”.

Celestine: “We call upon the God Emperor of Terra to heed us know. We ask that the hawk of the sun turn his immortal gaze upon us. We pray for the Master of Mankind to lead us on the path of the righteous!”

Gardhelm: “Praise the Emperor”.

Celestine: “We stand before you, lord of the Golden Throne, to strike where you would have us strike. The enemy’s ways confound¹⁸ us. Their strength tests us. Yet we shall be greater with your might gifted upon us”.

Gardhelm: “Praise the Emperor”.

Celestine: "I am the edge of the blade. I am the cut that ends foes. I am the wrath that topples¹⁹ armies. Sisters of the Martyred Lady, brothers of the Black Templars, will you fight with me?"

Gardhelm: "Yes!"

Celestine: "I feel your faith, brothers! But it must be stronger! You are sons of Dorn, the warriors of Sigismund! You call yourselves champions of the Emperor. He calls upon you now to lend me your wrath, lend me your hate, lend me your fire. Praise him!"

Black Templars (in one voice): "Praise the Emperor!"

* * *

Black Templars (in the distance): "Praise the Emperor".

Greater Demon: "Is that your plan, mortal? You will pray away my host?"

Greyfax: "The warp is a place of fear and hope, dread and faith. In here a word can wound, a thought can kill. Tell me, demon, why do you desire San Leor so much?"

Greater Demon: "I see your thoughts, mortal. This is nigh, you cannot hide your true self from me. Why do you throw your life in defense of a charade of a church? When the temples of the false Emperor have been broken open, Terra will fall. You think to hold us back. You have no faith".

Greyfax: "But I do have power. For me they are the same. You are a conjuration²⁰, a passing figment²¹ of interconnecting energies that believes it is alive. In all ways that matter you do not even exist".

Greater Demon: "Ah, stupid mortal. I will tear your soul from your body".

(thunder crackling)

(Demon screaming from pain)

Greyfax: "Who needs faith, when they have the Geller field?"

* * *

Celestine: "I can feel the heat of you burning wrath. I am the holy flames that will see us through this web of deception".

Black Templar: "Burn the unholy!"

Celestine: "The chorus of the God Emperor sings in my ears! Speak the righteous words, sing the praises, defy the darkness!"

Black Templars (in one voice): "We are the way! We are the light!"

Celestine (unsheathing her blade): "The veil parts before us! Imperator Dominatus!"

Black Templars (in one voice): "Imperator Dominatus!"

* * *

Voice (in the distance): "Imperator Dominatus!"

(warp storm dissolving)

Greater Demon: "Impossible... You will still pay, mortal. What you seek within these walls of pain is not what you will find. Death and despair await you".

Greyfax: "I am an Inquisitor. Death and despair are my trail to follow".

Greater Demon: "Good, step closer to your doom, mortal! The eight-turned god will send the blue flame to cleanse you once again. I shall AAAAAAAA!"
(demon prince screaming from pain)

Celestine (over vox): "The breach is made. I do not know how long it will last. All vessels, engage warp engines and translate".

(demonic screams fading)

(Greyfax breathing hard and trying to regain her breath)

Greyfax: "It... worked... Perhaps, she is blessed... All that remains is to see if we can get out again".

* * *

Servitor: "Translation complete".

(siren going off)

Servitor: "Proximity warning, celestial planetoid. Proximity warning, multiple stellar craft".

Gardhelm: "Blood of Terra, we've dropped directly into orbit. Helm22, full stop! Weapons, prepare all arms. Signals, contact the fleet and send assembly coordinates".

Black Templars (in one voice): "Aye, Marshal!"

Greyfax (approaching): "What is happening, Marshal Gardhelm?"

Gardhelm: "Breaching the storm has brought us straight into orbit over San Leor, Inquisitor. The other fleet ships are translating nearby".

(siren going off)

Servitor: "Proximity warning, multiple unidentified stellar craft".

Gardhelm: "Unidentified? Enemy ships already in orbit! Weapons, calculate targeting solutions".

Black Templar: "The scans do not show warships, Marshal. These rings for merchant transports, lightly armed warp frigates".

Gardhelm: "Merchant transports? They must be the ships Cardinal Kultza sent".

Greyfax: "Yes, he commandeered several non-naval vessels from fleets operating across his diocese²³".

Black Templar: "Marshal, we are detecting energy spikes from the surface. Communication's net is still active. Vox fragments and passive energy debris suggest ongoing conflict".

Servitor: "Broadcast intercepted. Cryptography category: unknown. Legiones Astartes configurations identified".

Greyfax: "Legiones Astartes configuration, what does that mean?"

Gardhelm: "Someone on San Leor is using vox cyphers that haven't been in protocol since the breakup of the Space Marine legions".

Greyfax: "Ten thousand years old? Heretic Astartes? I think Kultza's Frateris Templars was something very different".

Gardhelm: "Signals incoming from the rest of the fleet. All ships have safely transitioned. Sound general quarters".

(siren going off)

Longinus (over vox): "This is Centurion Longinus. I have run the transmission you detected through my apocryfax. It has identified them as originating from the Alpha Legion. Traitor operatives are in this system and on the surface. I suggest immediate offensive action before they react to our arrival".

Greyfax: "I concur, but be wary²⁴. The warp storm is more than just a barrier to the system. I believe it is sustaining infernal forces on the surface. Proceed with personal sanctity protocols".

Gardhelm: "The Black Templars will lead the attack. Censor arrays are pinpointing the greatest concentration of the enemy. A drop attack should cripple²⁵ their command structure in one blow".

Longinus (over vox): "I agree".

Gardhelm: "Full drop attack will be under way in ten minutes".

Longinus (over vox): "Understood".

Gardhelm: "Will you be joining us, Inquisitor Greyfax?"

Greyfax: "I shall be right at your side, Marshal Gardhelm".

* * *

(Greyfax and Gardhelm in a Thunderhawk)

Gardhelm: "We'll be making a forced landing in twenty minutes, Inquisitor. Scans confirm only one armed vessel amongst the traitor fleet. I have strike cruisers moving to seize or destroy the enemy transports".

Greyfax: "Good, we need to take as much intact as possible to find out how far this malignancy has spread".

Gardhelm: "The battle sisters will be creating perimeter sights around our drop to protect against counter-attack. We should be able to eliminate the enemy swiftly without distraction".

Greyfax: "If there is a demonic presence on San Leor, that will be unlikely".

Black Templar: "Entering upper atmosphere in twenty seconds".

Gardhelm: "We are not inexperienced in fighting the infernal hosts, Inquisitor. My warriors were part of Primarch Guilliman's Indomitus Crusade when it came to Ophelia. We found the world gripped by immortal fiends but we freed the shrines from their grasp and banished them back to the warp. San Leor will be no different".

Greyfax: "I hope your confidence is justified, Marshal".

Gardhelm: "It is. I am receiving a vox signal from my ship. Records show that our landing site is close to the original shrine of the daughters of the Emperor. It was where the sisterhood was created. Perhaps the honor of the first attack should be passed to the Order of Our Martyred Lady".

Greyfax: "We are mid-combat drop. I think we should keep the plan already in place, Marshal".

Black Templar: "Planet fall in approximately eighteen minutes".

Gardhelm: "You seem pensive²⁶, Inquisitor. I rate our chances of success highly. The enemy had very little time to prepare and we attack on the night side of the world with an overwhelming strike force. Every advantage is ours".

Greyfax: "Apart from knowing exactly what we are fighting".

Gardhelm: "Well, perhaps you should remain on the gunship during the attack. I can't spare warriors to ensure your safety".

Greyfax: "Your concern is misplaced".

Gardhelm: "My squads are highly trained and experienced, raised and equipped for swift and deadly attack. As an Inquisitor your expertise lies elsewhere. There is no shame in that".

Greyfax: "You will not find me a burden. I fought Abaddon the Despoiler on Cadia".

Gardhelm: "Ah, my apologies, Inquisitor Greyfax. I give you my salute. You are a true hero of the Imperium. I am honored to fight in this battle and would be proud to die with you at my side".

Greyfax: "I appreciate the sentiment, Marshal Gardhelm, but let us do all we can to ensure that it is the heretics that die today".

* * *

Celestine: "We have been granted a unique privilege in the history of the sisterhood. The most terrible foe has laid claim to our birthplace and we have been granted the honor of arresting it from them. In this holiest of causes there can be no relent²⁷, no hesitation, no mercy. We shall be divine retribution, the personification of the Emperor's wrath".

(gunships unleashing fire)

Celestine: "Hear now, as the enemy feels the first wrath of our gunners? Soon we shall tread upon holy soil and bring justice with bolter and blade.

Remember above all things that the Emperor is with us. Ready your war gear and armor your minds for we may face a foe not of the mortal realm. There is no temptation worth damnation. There is no distraction from our purity of purpose. There is no god but the Emperor".

Sisters of Battle (in unison): "No god, but the Emperor!"

Celestine: "Look to your sisters for strength and feel as one in your faith. We are bound by the love of the Emperor and our love for the Emperor. Look upon

me and know in your hearts that service is its own reward. Death is not the end. There is no vain sacrifice if you give your life for the Emperor. Slay in his name and die with pride and honor if you are called”.

Sisters of Battle (in unison): “For the Emperor!”

Celestine: “Now, sisters, take forth your holy rage and purge the unclean!”
(disembarkation begins)

Celestine: “Into glory, into history! For the sisterhood and the God Emperor!!!”

Sisters of Battle (in unison, charging the enemy): “For the God Emperor!”

* * *

Gardhelm (over vox): “Savior Four, attack run on the east flank. Hammer of Justice and Pious Crusader, I want suppressive fire on those heavy weapons in the ruins to the right. Squad Stale, Herald, Till and Alma, hold on position at one hundred meters”.

Longinus (over vox): “This is Longinus. Approaches from the west are secured, resistance minimal. Mostly poorly armed and untrained. Where are the corrupted Tempestus Scions and Alpha legionaries?”

Greyfax (over vox): “They are not against us”.

(Astartes gunships crushing the buildings on San Leor with heavy fire)

Celestine (over vox): “Cease fire, Marshal! This is the Templum Sorrowitas, the shrine of the daughters of the Emperor. You are bombarding one of our most sacred sites”.

Gardhelm (over vox): “Stones and mortar²⁸, sister Celestine, nothing more. In battle we carry our temples with us”.

Celestine (over vox): “You fire upon ground as holy as Terra, Gardhelm. A company of battle sisters will clear the ruins. Call off your gunship”.

Gardhelm (over vox): “Very well. If you wish to trade your lives for old stones, I won’t interfere. All commands, target anti-personnel weapons only. Supporting fire for the Sisters of Battle”.

Greyfax (over vox): “These steps lead into the main sanctuary, but the gates are closed. Why are the renegades not using the cover of the sanctum? (using psyker abilities) There are still Imperial forces still holding the central temple, we must break through to them”.

Gardhelm (over vox): “Battlegroup Prime, gather on my position for main assault!”

Celestine (over vox): “Watch your fire to the east”.

Longinus (over vox): “Our real-trained militia have been transmitting frantically²⁹ for the last minute. My ship detected an answering signal. Expect enemy reinforcements imminently”.

Gardhelm (over vox): “I want targeted orbital surveys on our position”.

Black Templar (over vox): "Already scanning, Marshal. We have high density of energy returns from the west, armored column. Detecting surging cyphered vox transmissions".

Gardhelm (over vox): "Alpha Legion heretics, incoming fast. Centurion, can you hold the flank?"

Longinus (over vox): "If you spare me a gunship or two, Marshal".

Gardhelm (over vox): "Agreed, Savior Two and Savior Three, field command passed to Centurion Longinus. Attend on station immediately".

Celestine (over vox): "I can see them from up here, ten armored vehicles, three of them Rhino transports. Another thirty of forty heretics following on foot, corrupted Walkers supporting them".

Greyfax (mumbling): "Anything... is strong... Cadia... Oh! Oh!"

Gardhelm (over vox): "Inquisitor, what is wrong?"

Greyfax (over vox): "They are coming!"

Gardhelm (over vox): "The counterattack can be contained, Inquisitor".

Greyfax (over vox): "The veil splits".

(demonic horde entering the mortal realm)

* * *

Celestine (slashing one of the demons): "Back to the abyss that spawned you! Sister Valienta, behind you!"

(Valienta killing another roaring demon)

Celestine: "Fight hard, my sisters! We have been delivered to this battle by the will of the God Emperor! See the fiends that would despoil our heritage and give praise that it is you who's chosen to defend our holy temple. Your faith shall be their undoing, your ire shall be their doom".

Longinus (over vox): "The Alpha legionaries have broken off".

Gardhelm (over vox): "Withdraw the perimeter, we need you closer".

Longinus (over vox): "Agreed. What is the condition of Inquisitor Greyfax?"

Gardhelm (over vox): "Still unconscious! Squad Hegemon is protecting her".

(demons roaring)

Celestine (over vox): "Our landing site is almost overrun, Marshal. If we do not hold in the east there is no clear ground for the battle sisters craft to land".

Gardhelm (over vox): "You are not thinking of leaving us, are you, sister?"

Longinus (over vox): "More reinforcements, armored skimmer-craft, Astra Militarum markings. Now we know who these Tempestus Scions are. The enemy tanks are pushing towards southern end of the battle sisters' line. If they extend any further we'll be too weak to hold against the heretic storm troopers".

Celestine (over vox): "We must give up the landing field and move companies to the south".

Longinus (over vox): "If we do that we have no means of getting back to orbit".

Gardhelm (over vox): "Why is everyone so concerned about leaving?"

Longinus (over vox): "If you believe the Emperor has a plan for you, I would think it would be something better than dying here for no reason".

Celestine (over vox): "These foes are here with a purpose and we are here to thwart them. If to do so we must sacrifice ourselves, then that is what shall be done".

Gardhelm (over vox): "A sentiment I can agree with, sister. All units, hold at all costs. Slay with gladness in your hearts! Of every heretic purged add once less to block the light of the Emperor. No pity, no remorse, no fear!!!"

Longinus (over vox): "I would rather you withdrew".

(temple bells chiming)

Celestine (over vox): "Look to the great tower of the temple! It burns with the pale flame of purity".

Longinus (over vox): "And sets a fire in the hearts of the demons. See them flee back to the warp!"

Gardhelm (over vox): "And someone at the main steps! The doors are moving!"
(main temple doors opening)

Celestine (over vox): "The battle sisters, they must have been holding the shrine for all of this time".

Gardhelm (over vox): "A century and more? How?"

Longinus (over vox): "The warp storm would have twisted time as well as space. Perhaps for them it is only a matter of days or weeks since the attacks began. I am going to lead a counterattack against these Alpha legionaries. Without their demonic allies they are in a precarious³¹ position".

Gardhelm (over vox): "Cut them down with glee³², Centurion!"

Sabrina (over vox): "Attention, warriors of the Emperor! The blessing of the bells of absolution will not hold for long. Call back your troopships and return to orbit. If you remain on San Leor, you will be trapped in this unending battle".

Celestine (over vox): "And who commands the garrison of San Leor to give such an order?"

Sabrina (over vox): "I am sister Sabrina, canoness of the Order of Our Martyred Lady, abbess elect of the Convent Sanctorum".

* * *

Sabrina: "You can put her down here. Sister Resunda is a sister hospitalier. She will care for the Inquisitor".

Celestine: "I cannot believe that you are still here, abbess Sabrina".

Sabrina: "Canoness, I was never confirmed as abbess. My pilgrimage to this shrine was... interrupted".

Gardhelm: "That was more than a century ago".

Sabrina: "It was? It has not seemed that long. When the demons come, our chronometers fail. Perhaps time has flowed strangely on San Leor since the warp storm took us".

(temple bells chiming, debris falling from the dome)

Celestine: "How have you survived for so long against such a testing foe?"

Gardhelm: "The archives rated the garrison of 100 battle sisters and your escort numbered 200 more. I see almost that complement³³ holding this temple. I have great respect for the fighting potential of the Adepta Sorrowitas but I find your survival unlikely".

Sabrina: "It is our faith that has sustained us".

Gardhelm: "It's good that your morale..."

Sabrina (interrupting): "No, it is our pure faith that has kept the demons at bay. This is the shrine of Saint Alicia, she that took the head of Goge Vandire, the first of the new sisterhood. The bells that tolled, the bells of absolution, were blessed by Saint Sebastian Thor. This whole world is sacred. Despite the storm that rages in the warp it is agony to the conjurations of the dark powers to set foot on San Leor. This temple remains impenetrable to the demons while any of true faith hold it against them".

Celestine: "The living reinforcements from cardinal Kultza must have been intended to break the siege".

Gardhelm: "So the Emperor did guide us here for a purpose, to purge these mortal followers of darkness and free San Leor?"

Sabrina: "I do not understand what you are saying, but..."

(Greyfax regaining conscience)

Celestine: "Katarinya!"

Greyfax: "We... are inside the shrine?"

Gardhelm: "The battle has abated³⁴ for the time being at least. Let me help you".

Greyfax (standing up): "Oh... You are sister Sabrina? The canoness that was lost?"

Sabrina: "How could you know? Have we met?"

Greyfax: "When the demons tore through the barrier of the warp it triggered my psychic awareness. The power that flooded my thoughts was too much, but as I lay overwhelmed and paralyzed I felt your soul emanating from the shrine".

Sabrina: "Yes, I am the focus for my sisters. Through me their prayer and dedication is channeled".

Celestine: "A true leader of the Adepta Sorrowitas".

Gardhelm: "Centurion Longinus is coordinating the defense with my sergeants and the canonesses, but we need a plan of attack. We have the advantage for

the moment. We should hunt down the traitor legionaries and Kultza's soldiers while their inhuman allies are regrouping in the warp".

Celestine: "We risk losing the landing site again. If the demons return whilst the pursuit is under way..."

Sabrina: "Your reinforcement is welcome, but I cannot expect you to stay".

Greyfax: "No, we will stay a while. Marshal Gardhelm is correct. We should use this opportunity to crush Kultza's forces and the Alpha Legion allies, then you will be able to withdraw".

Sabrina: "You have not heard what I said. I cannot leave. If the temple is abandoned, there will be nothing to keep the demons at bay".

Celestine: "All the while the storm rages you are at risk, sister".

Sabrina: "If we have been here for one hundred years already, a few more are of no consequence".

Greyfax: "It could be forever. The whole galaxy is riven by the Cicatrix Maledictum. This warp storm may never abate".

Sabrina: "Then I pray to the God Emperor for a long life. We cannot allow San Leor to fall".

Gardhelm: "I understand it is an important symbol to the sisterhood, but it would be folly³⁵ to waster your life defending these ancient stones. The Emperor needs every able warrior fighting the greater war".

Sabrina: "And that is what we are doing here. It is not just sentiment that we fight for. The demons need possession of the Templum Sorrowitas though I do not know exactly why. They taunt me with this fact, try to break my will with threats that the Ecclesiarchy will fall when I fall. Little do they understand that this promise only strengthens our resolve".

Celestine: "I know well the burden of duty. I pray to the God Emperor that you bear it for a long time".

(debris falling from the dome)

Gardhelm: "I believe we have our mission parameters. The Black Templars and Sisters of Battle will combine to eradicate the mortal enemy and then we must depart and trust to you to hold the shrine indefinitely".

Greyfax: "We shall keep a closer watch on the surrounding systems to ensure the traitors don't make further attempts of reinforcement while the storm persists".

Sabrina: "And I shall give thanks to the God Emperor every day for that vigil".

* * *

Longinus (over vox): "This is Centurion Longinus, enemy forces have mustered³⁶ two points: one north and the other westward of the shrine. Orbital survey indicates that they will be ready to attack again within thirty minutes".

Gardhelm (over vox): "Acknowledged. If we are to counterattack it should be now".

Greyfax: "I sense that the warp echoes of the bells of absolution have all but faded. The demons will return soon and we shall be embroiled in bitter fighting again".

Gardhelm: "Sister Sabrina, could you ring the bells for us again?"

Sabrina: "If that were so simple, we should toll the bells incessantly. The power of the cleansing bell is only restored by prayer and sacrifice".

Greyfax: "Yes, I felt the strength of that power in my unconscious thoughts. Your faith as you call it robs the demons of their energy by creating a null space in the warp around San Leor. Your hate ripples through the warp cleansing it briefly".

Sabrina: "Do the details matter? It harms the demons that is all we need to know".

Greyfax: "No, it may also be your way free of this place. Do not sound the bells unless you absolutely must. I think that if you hold out long enough, the accumulated power will be great enough to break the storm if allowed to reach its full potential".

Sabrina: "And how would we know when is time?"

Greyfax: "If sister Celestine is to be believed, the Emperor will send you a sign. Otherwise, I would wait until I had no other choice".

Longinus (over vox): "Auspex returns show that the enemy is maneuvering to the south trying to outflank".

Gardhelm: "We need to launch our attack swiftly. The enemies are readying for their own assault".

Greyfax: "I have reconsidered my opinion. We cannot risk being trapped on San Leor when the demons return in full force. Their strength is linked to the intensity of the storm. While they are covered, we may be able to break out again without too much effort. If we wait..."

Gardhelm (interrupting): "We can't abandon sister Sabrina without a fight".

Sabrina: "Trust me, Marshal, it is relief enough that our pride will be known beyond San Leor. The casualties you have already caused may well have already swung the fight in our favor".

Greyfax: "When I delved³⁷ into the warp, I sensed something of the demon's intent. Sabrina is right. They are determined to take the shrine, but it is not their sole focus. One of them said: when the temples of the false Emperor have been broken open, Terra will fall".

Sabrina: "Multiple temples. San Leor is only one part of their infernal scheme".

Celestine: "They intend to topple the Ecclesiarchy. One shrine world at a time... Ophelia VII must be another target".

Gardhelm: "We will stop their second attempt to domination just as we halted the first".

Sabrina: "What do you mean by that?"

Celestine: "When the Great Rift engulfed the system, Ophelia was beset by an incursion³⁸ of the dark powers. Servants of the forbidden gods enslaved the worlds of our sisterhood under the lead of the creature called the Tyrant of the Blue Flame".

Gardhelm: "With the aid of the Primarch we shattered its unholy legions, but the fiend itself escaped retribution".

Sabrina: "Primarch?"

Greyfax: "A far longer conversation than we have time for now. The previous attack was linked to the conjuring of the Great Rift itself, one of the many ritual assaults that weakened the barrier between our realm and the warp. If the servants of the forbidden powers are defiling sites of great faith, Ophelia VII would indeed be a rich target".

Celestine: "And before the coming of the Tyrant of the Blue Flame there was growing strife on Ophelia VII. The attack was heralded by months of unrest. I think we have fooled ourselves into thinking it must be either San Leor or Ophelia".

Greyfax: "I concur. The assassination attempt on Terra, the attack on the Ecclesiarch by Kultza's followers, perhaps even the whole plot around abandoning the Decree Absolute might be intended to destabilize the system".

Celestine: "You speak of these events in mere political terms, but for me the range of the attack is far more obvious. These assaults are not on the Ecclesiarchy, but are attempts to undermine the foundations of our faith. They intend to not only disrupt the running of the Adeptus Ministorum, but to breach the same wards of virtue around Ophelia that protect San Leor".

Gardhelm: "As a prelude to renew demonic attack".

Longinus (over vox): "We cannot risk remaining at San Leor. If this supposition proves true, the alpha level event in the cathedral of ascension might not have been solely targeted at Deacis".

Greyfax: "What do you mean, Centurion?"

Longinus (over vox): "Many of the faithful conduct pilgrimage to Ophelia VII before attempting to travel to Terra. The crisis of faith on both the Throne world and the Synod Ministra's capital might ripple along the entirety of the pilgrimage pathways".

Greyfax: "It could extend the Cicatrix Maledictum to crack open reality".

Longinus (over vox): "And bring the Great Rift into the Segmentum Solar to isolate Terra itself".

Celestine: "God Emperor, preserve us!"

Greyfax: "If we fail, the resulting cataclysm could block out the Astronomicon entirely. It would destroy the Imperium".

* * *

Sabrina: "Sister Celestine!"

Celestine: "Sister Sabrina! How can I help?"

Sabrina: "I have heard the Ecclesiarch Deaces abandoned the Decree Passive".

Celestine: "That is right. We do not know how, but the announcement is tied to these events in some way".

Sabrina: "Was I replaced?"

Celestine: "I do not understand the question".

Sabrina: "Has another sister been chosen as abbess of the Convent Sanctorum?"

Celestine: "No, by time it seemed certain you had been lost, the first tumult³⁹ of the Great Rift had started. Ophelia was beset for years by a demonic tide before it was freed. There has been no occasion for a replacement to be named and with San Leor cut off any nominee would not have been able to complete the pilgrimage. Why do you ask?"

Sabrina: "I fear that in part my absence has allowed this calamity⁴⁰ to grow. Had I been instated as abbess I would have put more pressure on the Synod Ministra not to confirm Deacis's plan to revoke the Decree Passive".

Celestine: "No blame could be set upon you for these events".

Sabrina: "Oh, I am not speaking of blame, but practicality. The Orders Militant, Hospitalier, Dialogis and Famulus are powerful forces within the Imperium and even more so within the structure of the Ecclesiarchy. With no abbess of the Convent Sanctorum to act as their representative I suspect their opinion has become more muted. You cannot allow that to continue".

Celestine: "I am a soldier, Sabrina, not a politician".

Sabrina: "Ah, and you think I was not?"

Celestine: "Of course, I do not".

Sabrina: "You are something far greater than a politician or even a leader. You are a symbol, Celestine. You are a Living Saint, the embodiment of the Emperor's divinity. Your word carries weight and I know that it has been silenced of late".

Celestine: "How can you be certain of that?"

Sabrina: "Because I know that you would allow nothing to threaten the sisterhood".

Celestine: "You speak of the sisterhood and the Ecclesiarchy as different things".

Sabrina: "Of course they are".

Celestine: "Do you accept Deacis the 23rd as head of the Adeptus Ministorum?"

Sabrina: "I do. He is the head of our church. That does not make him commander of the Adepta Sorroritas, Celestine, and this is where he is in error to revoke the Decree Passive".

Celestine: "How so?"

Sabrina: "The sisterhood has twin leaders: the abbess of the Convent Sanctorum on Ophelia VII and the Convent Prioris on Terra. How long has it been since the holy prioress of Terra sat on the Senatorum Imperialis? Only three have done so since our founding four thousand years ago. Yet cardinals by the score have sat beside the Ecclesiarch among the High Lords of Terra".

Celestine: "I do not desire power, sister".

Lesia: "Canoness, we must withdraw and close the main gates".

Sabrina: "Thank you, sister Lesia. The Emperor granted power to you all the same, Celestine. Remember, that even as Deacis is the embodiment of the Ecclesiarchy to a million worlds, you are an embodiment of faith to the countless armies that fight under the God Emperor's banner. If Deacis creates a new Frateris Templars he is usurping the power bestowed to you, moving against the will of the God Emperor".

Celestine: "I had not... Oh... It is still too much, to expect the church to move to the word of a Battle Sister against the desire of the Ecclesiarch".

Sabrina: "Oh, your humility⁴¹ does you credit, Celestine. Much like the first of us became prioress of Terra, revered Palmira of the Order of the Holy Word, it was she that first traveled to San Leor, to seek benediction⁴² and purpose before taking the title upon herself succeeding as head of the orders after the death of holy Alicia Dominica".

Celestine: "She was rightfully reluctant⁴³, fearful of aggrandizing⁴⁴ herself above the sisterhood".

Sabrina: "But she took the title all the same, as you must assume the role for which the Emperor has prepared you. A holy warrior, not from the Imperial Guard, but from the sisterhood. The Imperium is on the verge of ruin, threatened in a way not even ten thousand years".

Lesia: "Canoness, the temple must be sealed now!"

Sabrina: "Yet four thousand years ago the Age of Apostasy⁴⁵ nearly claimed us. The Imperial church was riven with schism and terrible genocides were wrought in the name of the corrupted Ecclesiarch. The first Sister of Battle Saint Alicia led us from those times in the company of Black Templars, inquisitors and tech-priests of Mars".

Celestine: "I have kept the company of such folk in recent times".

Sabrina: "And I see no surer sign of what you are meant to do".

Celestine: "I do not, but I will pray for guidance".

Sabrina: "I am sure the God Emperor will make known his plans for you. Until then be wary of the commands of priests".

* * *

Gardhelm: "Savior One is the last Thunderhawk. We embark now. Sister Sabrina, we will cover your withdrawal into the Templum Sorrowitas".

Sabrina (over vox): "Your offer is noble, Marshal Gardhelm, but I must decline. My sisters and I will provide cover fire while you embark. Tactically it is the most sensible approach".

Greyfax: "The abbess is correct. We need to leave quickly. I feel the veil between worlds thinning once more. The demons will return soon".

Gardhelm: "Oh, very well. Squads Galliard and Gardhelm, convergent46 fire with sister Sabrina's command and fall back to embark on Savior One".

Celestine: "Your names will be inscribed in the rolls of the saints".

Sabrina (over vox): "We are the God Emperor's fury. Our blades shall sing our prayers to him".

Celestine: "May the God Emperor guide you to your redemption, revered sister".

Sabrina (over vox): "Inquisitor Greyfax, you made a mistake. My title is canoness. I was not confirmed as abbess".

Greyfax: "You will be on your return. If I live I will ensure it. It is time the Convent Sanctorum had a head once more, even if she may take a while until she again leads her holy orders".

Sabrina (over vox): "Oh, this is unexpected. You have my thanks, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "It is deserved and appropriate, sister".

Longinus: "Our allies of the Battle Sisters are aboard their transports. Hurry, I see the blue armor of foes getting closer".

(demons entering the mortal realm)

Greyfax: "Foulness returns, the demons are back".

Gardhelm: "Full speed to orbit. Weapons, respond".

(gunships unleashing salvos of gunfire)

* * *

Celestine (over vox): "Sabrina?"

Sabrina (over vox): "Yes, sister".

Celestine (over vox): "San Leor will be freed. We will return. I swear by the God Emperor. Fight well! For the Emperor!"

(angelic singing)

(demons roaring)

OUR MARTYRED LADY – THE STERNEST1 TEST (2019)

Written by Gav Thorpe

Performed by Catherine Tate, Emma Gregory, Ramon Tikaram, Toby Longworth, Steve Conlin, David Sibley and Richard Reed

Scripted by Reverend

LIST OF CHARACTERS:

- * Inquisitor Katarinya Greyfax
- * Celestine, the Living Saint
- * Marshal Gardhelm
- * Custodian Longinus
- * Assistant Kyrillos
- * Greater Demon of Tzeentch;
- * Trevayne, Lord Inquisitor
- * Auward, Black Templar
- * Marzel, Apothecary

Black Templar: “Marshal Gardhelm. Surveyors are picking up massive energy discharges, plasma debris and fragment fields”.

Gardhelm: “Void war... Broadcast to the whole fleet to assume general quarters2. Battle alert! Raise void shields!”

Celesine (over vox): “What is happening, Marshal? Have we not translated into Ophelia system?”

Gardhelm (over vox): “We are at Ophelia, sister Celestine. It looks like there’s been an attack in our absence”.

Celesine (over vox): “You must help Ophelia VII immediately, Marshal. I am coming to the command deck”.

Gardhelm (over vox): “Contact Inquisitor Greyfax and inform her of the situation. Maximum power to surveyors, show me what’s happening”.

Black Templar: “Scan readings indicate ongoing conflict, Marshal. Detecting transmissions scatter from within system”.

Gardhelm: “Decipher and put them on the command address”.

Black Templar: “Aye, Marshal. Filtering the command address system now”.

Female Voice 1 (over vox, interference): “Entering the domains of Ophelia...”

Female Voice 2 (over vox, interference): “Negative... Full back or we will open fire...”

Female Voice 1 (over vox, interference): “Cease fire! We require immediate detection... We act to... Full scale evacuation...”

Black Templar: "There are others, Marshal".

Male Voice 1 (over vox, interference): "Maneuver for broadside fire. We can't let those bastards... What happened to the semi-light? Where is the scan support? We are fighting blindly..."

Black Templar: "More of the same, Marshal. Fragmentary data, corrupted broadcasts. Whoever attacked did so with speed and precision".

Greyfax (entering the command deck): "Marshal, are we under attack?"

Gardhelm: "Not yet, Inquisitor Greyfax, but Ophelia VII is".

Greyfax: "Insanity! Ophelia VII is one of the most heavily protected planets in the Segmentum Solar. Who would be so stupid?"

Celestine (entering the command deck): "Have you received word from the Ecclesiarch yet?"

Gardhelm: "I have other priorities, sister Celestine. We have ships translating from the warp all around us. First we must make sure the fleet assembles safely".

Celestine: "Any contact from the Order of Our Martyred Lady?"

Gardhelm: "Three of their ships have translated and acknowledged the call to general quarters".

Greyfax: "It will be hours, possibly even days until all our ships arrive. We need to push in system and investigate what is happening".

Gardhelm: "Until this moment, Inquisitor, I have been content to allow you to dictate our course of action. That ends now. This is void battle and I will prepare for it as I deem right".

Greyfax: "Void battle or not I..."

Gardhelm (interrupting): "Inquisitor Greyfax, remove yourself from my command bridge or I will have you removed. Whatever the consequences later".

Greyfax: "Those consequences will..."

Celestine (interrupting): "Katarinya, is this the time for remonstrations?"

Greyfax: "No, it is not. As you wish it, Marshal Gardhelm. I need a vox relay connected to my quarters. I may be able to contact Kyrillos for more information".

Gardhelm: "It will be done. Sister Celestine, you may remain if you wish".

Celestine: "No, Marshal. I shall not distract you further. If I may use your chapel, I shall pray".

Gardhelm: "Pray for what, sister Celestine?"

Celestine: "That our fears are unfounded and that Ophelia's fall will not herald another great catastrophe".

Gardhelm: "The battle is still being fought. We can still save the planet".

Celestine: "Yet because of Deacis's poor judgment it might be too late to save the Ecclesiarchy".

(Celestine treading away)

* * *

Greyfax (writing down her report): "Entire system under attack, but we are not going to find who is attacking. Save us from the pride of military minds. Kultza could not have known, it was a reflex thought – San Leor. We were right to go there. It was not a diversion. As Longinus said it was both, not one or the other".

(beeping sound)

Black Templar (over vox): "This is the command bridge, Inquisitor Greyfax".

Greyfax (over vox): "Yes?"

Black Templar (over vox): "Your long band vox has been established. Which channel shall I put it on?"

Greyfax (over vox): "Private chamber. I shall encrypt it myself".

Black Templar (over vox): "As you wish, Inquisitor".

(beeping sound)

Greyfax (looking for something): "Where is it? Here? There you are. Detect voice, Inquisitor Katarinya Greyfax".

(ADSL modem sounds)

Machine: "Voice detected, analyzing. Identified as Inquisitor Katarinya Greyfax".

Greyfax: "Detect vox channel, replicate!"

Machine: "Vox channel detected, replicating".

Greyfax: "Encode channel, highest security. Scan for broadcast interceptions and signal fluctuations".

Machine: "Scanning, scanning, scanning! Channel is secure. Coding started, select destination".

Greyfax: "Naravand Kyrillos, destination Alpha, highest priority".

(ADSL modem sounds)

Greyfax: "Answer it! Come on, Kyrillos, I had it implanted in your ear so you could not lose it".

(sounds of gunshots over the vox)

Kyrillos: "Inquisitor, praise the Emperor! A blessing that you are alive".

Greyfax: "I am pleased that you are also still with us. Tell me everything".

Kyrillos: "It is pandemonium4 down here, Inquisitor. Unidentified ships arrived in system twenty one days ago (interference) protecting flotilla..."

Greyfax: "Are you still there, Kyrillos?"

Kyrillos: "Picked up unknown broadcast across the system. That when the attacks on the surface started. Two orbital stations fired down into the palaces

with missiles. Luckily the Ecclesiarch was addressing the sanctification of a new statue away from the cardinal towers”.

Greyfax: “Who, who is attacking?”

Kyrillos: “Everyone, renegade Space Marines, traitor Frateris Templars arriving on merchant vessels, sympathizers within the ranks of the pilgrims and clergy. It’s like everyone has gone mad. Even the Adeptus Arbites are divided, taking sides precinct⁵ by precinct”.

Greyfax: “Where are you? Is the Ecclesiarch safe?”

Kyrillos: “(interference) Deacis is alive, but wounded. We are moving him to the Convent Sanctorum”.

Greyfax: “Say that again. Where are you?”

Kyrillos: “Under escort of the battle sisters. The enemy Space Marines have targeted the Convent Sanctorum but they are holding out (interference) It is not just a physical attack, Inquisitor”.

Greyfax: “I am losing the signal”.

Kyrillos: “There’s.... There’s something else... Nightmares, fights, murders... Since just after you left there have spates⁶ of discord⁷ and aggravation⁸ in the pilgrims. They are short-tempered, quick to violence. Three weeks ago there were riots when access to the Emperor’s holy relic was closed. Even the Synod Ministra seems punctured through. Everything is becoming fractured”.

Greyfax: “What data can you send me?”

Kyrillos: “I tried studying the outbreaks for a pattern, but I can’t see anything at all. I told to match it to allies of Kultza and I spoke with the Ecclesiarch to see if he could make sense of it from a politics view point”.

(explosion, debris falling over screaming Kyrillos)

Greyfax: “Kyrillos? Are you there?”

Kyrillos: “Some of the involved cardinals argued heavily against the Decree Passive dissolution before aligning with the vote. Others were in favor. There is no geographical context. It’s all across Ophelia VII, same is sectarian, theological and hierarchical analysis”.

Greyfax: “So not an environmental contaminant?”

Kyrillos: “Right, it can’t be water or airborne. It has to be psychic. The astropaths sent messages on Terra, also growing reports of disturbance from the edge of the system. Navigators are refusing to translate at the system’s boundary”.

Greyfax: “First the Alpha level event on Terra and now this. To blanket a whole world with this type of effect requires terrible power. They must be in the system somewhere”.

Kyrillos: “We are boarding now. Jamming array will come into effect. What do you want me to do, Inquisitor?”

Greyfax: "Stay alive, Kyrillos. When you reach the Convent Sanctorum, get a secure uplink to Marshal Gardhelm and send everything to me".

Battle Sister: "Closing the ramp in thirty seconds, archdeacon".

Kyrillos: "What about the Ecclesiarch?"

Greyfax: "Keep him alive if you can but your data is more important. This schism is already bigger than Deacis".

Kyrillos: "Right, I will signal in a few hours. Emperor, protect you, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "Stay alert, help is coming. End of transmission. Contact command bridge".

Black Templar: "Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "Inform Marshal Gardhelm that I need an audience with him.

Centurion Longinus and sister Celestine should be present also in one hour".

Black Templar: "Affirmative, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "That level of psychic power needs a focus. Time to see where it is coming from".

* * *

Greyfax: "Servitor, enforce communication silence and bar entry protocols".

Servitor: "As commanded, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "Activate vox record personal archive".

(beeping sound)

Greyfax: "Archive recording of Inquisitor Katarinya Greyfax, auto-transmit. The investigation that began on Gallant V nearly a year ago is almost complete.

Whilst on the journey from San Leor I have been reading the book of Eucletius and the selected inquiries by Inquisitor Doambassa. The eight turned god I am reasonably confident to presume is a euphemism for abyssal entity code 9, also known as the Changer of the Ways, Zahnoris and many other names and titles. Disciples are known to be masters of morphism and sorcery. Combined with the presence of the Alpha Legion warriors and operatives at San Leor and Ophelia VII it is sensible to assume widespread infiltration of part of the Ecclesiarchy".

(Greyfax taking a sip)

Greyfax: "As well as political agitation I believe the evidence presented by my agent on the surface indicates psychic influence of some kind, affecting the judgment and loyalty of those at Ophelia. An extensive planet-wide if not system-wide effect would require considerable resources. I believe it should be straightforward to trace the psychic disturbance to its source. I expect the practitioners to have employed a demonic contract to safeguard themselves against repercussions associated with the conjuration of this magnitude. I am no demonologist despite recent experiences and I will need protection. To that

end I am going to employ a theo-tangent aurary as a focus. Time to find out exactly what is guarding this world”.

(Greyfax launching the weird clocklike device)

Calm, Katarinya, no harm can come to you, if you do not allow it”.

(Greyfax using psyche abilities)

Greyfax: “Ophelia VII. Celestine was correct. The faith burns like an aura. Yes I feel it”.

Greater Demon (barely heard): “From the darkness springs light. From the past springs life”.

Greyfax: “I can feel you, traitors. Where are you?”

Greater Demon (barely heard): “Norus tashkan ah kanwud of kenron! As was the burning fire... shall be the burning fire...”

Greyfax: “I have you, just a few more... Ah”

(enigmatic device breaking up)

(Greyfax collapsing to the floor unconsciously)

* * *

Celestine (standing behind the door): “Katarinya? Inquisitor Greyfax?”

Servitor: “Command override not accepted, inquisitorial protocols in effect”.

Celestine (standing behind the door): “Stand back, brother Auward!”

(Celestine breaking the door)

Celestine: “Katarinya! Fetch her Apothecary, brother”.

(brother Auward running away)

Celestine: “Inquisitor Greyfax, Katarinya! Can you hear me? Wake up, Katarinya. It is Celestine. Wake up!”

Greyfax (moaning): “Eh... Oh... What power of...”

Celestine: “It is sister Celestine, Katarinya!”

Greyfax: “I felt them too, the flames, the flames that will consume Ophelia”.

Celestine: “Do not try to get up”.

Greyfax: “We are running out of time. Help me up, sister”.

Celestine: “You look unwell, Inquisitor. These metal shards... What happened?”

Greyfax: “A psychic ability greater than I had anticipated, demonically powered”.

Celestine: “An Apothecary is on the way, rest a moment”.

Greyfax: “No, we do not have time, Celestine. This power, it is growing stronger every hour. I felt it, this is not the end of the matter simply, a process of the beginning of something more devastating”.

Celestine: “What can we do to stop it?”

Greyfax: “Find the sorcerers and kill them”.

Celestine: “And you know where they are?”

Apothecary: “Inquisitor, I was told you were incapacitated”.

Greyfax: "As you can see, Apothecary, I have recovered".

Apothecary: "My med-scan indicates no trauma. Have you sustained any injury?"

Greyfax: "Only to my pride".

Apothecary: "It would be better if you came to the Apothecarion for analysis".

Greyfax: "I am unharmed, brother Apothecary. I require no further assistance".

Apothecary: "I will not insist, but contact me immediately if you feel something amiss. You also, sister Celestine. Please report any untoward¹⁰ behavior from Inquisitor Greyfax".

Celestine: "I will, brother Marzel".

(Apothecary treading away)

Celestine: "You vex¹¹ them".

Greyfax: "I know. My psychic powers concern them, but my authority overrides their suspicion of witchcraft. I can feel the drives at full power, what is happening?"

Celestine: "Marshal Gardhelm has ordered that the fleet makes all speed for Ophelia VII. Sit, Katarinya".

Greyfax: "You disagree with that course of action?"

Celestine: "I do not trust the Black Templars to show due restraint around the cardinal world. His intervention could be even more catastrophic than the current attack".

Greyfax: "We might have another target for him. When I detected the demonic surge, it did not come from Ophelia VII. One of the other planets or ship, perhaps. I could try to locate the source more closely but my focus... the theo-tangent aurary is spattered across my armor".

(pause)

Celestine: "Would you be able to use me as a focus?"

Greyfax (pouring some water in a glass): "What do you mean?"

Celestine: "I do not understand the intricacies of what you are trying, but I think the focus acts as a kind of proxy to protect you from the backlash of power".

Greyfax: "Put simply, yes, it is a psychic shield of sorts".

Celestine: "Had you not been using one, you would now be dead or mindless".

Greyfax: "The focus acts between my mind and the warp to create a sanctuary buffer. I do not see how you could do that".

Celestine: "My faith is my shield. You have seen that. Open your thoughts to me. Pass your scrying¹² through me and I shall protect you".

Greyfax: "Impossible".

Celestine: "What is impossible? I assure you, I have the mental fortitude to resist whatever comes upon us".

Greyfax: "We would share thoughts. I am an Inquisitor possessing secret knowledge and I cannot simply open my mind to you".

Celestine: "Trust me, Katarinya. Show a little faith".

* * *

(Greyfax and Celestine entering the chapel)

Greyfax (scornfully): "The Marshal's chapel. Look at the artifacts, relics and bones, superstition given form".

Celestine: "This chamber is imbued¹³ with the faith of the Black Templars. Their prayers have... The objects here are imprinted¹⁴ with their blessings, focused on the God Emperor. I can feel them. They give me strength".

Greyfax: "Very well. When can we start?"

Celestine: "I am ready. Kneel with me, Katarinya".

Greyfax: "I do not pray, Celestine".

Celestine: "It is an act of subservience¹⁵. You are a servant of the Emperor, are you not?"

Greyfax: "I am".

(Celestine and Greyfax kneeling)

Celestine: "God Emperor of Terra, lend us your strength..."

Greyfax: "Is that going to be necessary?"

Celestine: "Yes, Katarinya, it is. If you desire the shield of my faith, you must accept it. Justify it how you wish, the channeling of warp current or a nascent¹⁶ psychic deflection, but I am the conduit for the Emperor's will. You may have seen many amazing and terrible things in your life, Katarinya, but you have not died and been returned. I have seen beyond the veil and so I will pray".

Greyfax: "Well, my apologies then..."

Celestine: "Perhaps it will help to focus your power upon me as I pray".

(silence)

Celestine: "God Emperor of Terra, lend us your strength as we embark into the darkness. Let our undying devotion to you be the light that burns away the shadows. We are but the blade, the divine will is the hand that moves us".

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "I feel you, Celestine".

Celestine: "We are the bolter and the bolt, the gauntlet and the fist, the lantern and the light".

Greyfax (using psyker abilities): "I see the light. I see..."

(Greyfax having a vision)

(Trazyn laughing)

Imperial Guardsman: "Die, abomination".

Trazyn (slashing the soldier): "Ahahaha, the Corpse Emperor..."

Greyfax: "I see... abomination..."

Trazyn: "That word again. Stop me if this sounds familiar, but I suspect your priorities require re-evaluation".

Greyfax: "You sow corruption wherever you tread. Your reckoning is overdue".

Trazyn: "I am not a fool. The mind shackle will not let you harm me".

Greyfax: "You've corrupted me as you did Valeria".

(vision fading)

Celestine: "What did the Necron do to you?"

Greyfax: "It no longer matters. Celestine, we are losing our connection".

Celestine: "What did the Necron put into you, Katarinya? What happened?"

Greyfax: "Your suspicion is weakening our bond".

Celestine: "Then reassure me, Katarinya. What did that alien lord put inside you?"

Greyfax (sobbing): "Ah... It was the one called Trazyn the Infinite. It spared my life and used some kind of techno-infection to control my mind to stop me attacking. It does not matter. The tech-priest Cawl removed its taint from my body. I am free of the mind shackle¹⁷".

Celestine: "All of it? You are wholly free of the taint?"

Greyfax: "That is my hope. I was helpless, Celestine, rendered incapable. I wish I can promise. I do not know if I will be helpless again".

Celestine: "I believe you. I believe in you, Katarinya".

Greyfax: "I see the source of it again. It pounds upon my thoughts".

Celestine (moaning): "I hear their whispers. They are scratching at my soul, daggers of evil trying to plunge into my blood".

Greyfax: "Not this time! Not again! Ahhhhhhhh"

Celestine: "I am with you, sister. Push into your flames. I am your shield".

Greyfax: "It will scorch¹⁸ me".

Celestine: "The God Emperor protects, Katarinya. Trust in the Emperor".

Greyfax: "I see through the flames. I see bones..."

Celestine (sobbing): "Ahhhhhhhh..."

Greyfax: "A mountain of bones... A sea of skulls..."

Celestine (sobbing in shock): "I hear them all... The martyred ones... My dear sisters... I will nothing more".

* * *

Celestine: "I saw the source of the flames".

Greyfax: "One of the inner planets, Ophelia IV".

Celestine: "The ossuary¹⁹ sanctorum, world grave of the system".

* * *

Gardhelm: "The fleet is assembling in orbit over Ophelia IV. Are you ready, sister Celestine?"

Celestine: "Any signals from the surface?"

Gardhelm: "Nothing remarkable, yet. I hope we've not diverted from the real battle to a deserted planet. Twelve days have passed since you and the Inquisitor determined our new course, but we haven't seen any sign of enemy activity here".

Celestine: "Both Inquisitor Greyfax and I sensed the same origin for the malicious energy that afflicts the system".

Gardhelm: "We would have arrived at Ophelia VII two days ago had we travelled directly".

Celestine: "We have been brought here. That cannot be changed now. I pray that we do the right thing".

Black Templar: "Marshal, the Inculcate²⁰ Hate and the Wisdom of Sigismund are on escort position. The flotilla from the Order of Our Martyred Lady is also maneuvering to orbit".

(Katarinya entering the chambers)

Celestine: "Any fresh word from Ophelia VII, Katarinya?"

Greyfax: "Nothing useful since Kyrillos's last report eight days ago and that was almost incomprehensible. There is a communication blockade in effect. The Convent Sanctorum was holding, but I don't think it would do so for much longer".

Celestine: "I am sure the battle sisters will fight until the last".

Greyfax: "I would rather they did not have to. Are we ready, Marshal?"

Gardhelm: "We will be entering high orbit above Ophelia IV within the hour, Inquisitor. Drop cascades and gunships have been rearmed and prepared for the planet-fall assault".

Black Templar: "Marshal, readings from the surface".

Gardhelm: "Energy surges... Vox scatter... There is definitely someone down there".

Black Templar: "Surveyors are also catching dissipating plasma trail, estimate a small group of warships of light cruiser class or larger in orbit on the other side of Ophelia IV".

Gardhelm: "A paltry²¹ force... We outmatch them, though had all of the ships from the Order of Our Martyred Lady arrived it would be an even swifter victory".

Servitor: "The Majesty of Terra has arrived in system".

Celestine: "You agreed that it was necessary to split the two fleets, Marshal. The defense of the cardinal world had to be reinforced and sending some of the battle sisters was the best choice".

Gardhelm: "It still feels like we are chasing shadows here. The battle rages and we slink away from it".

Greyfax: "In the contrary, Marshal. If the psychic projection is emanating from Ophelia IV, it is imperative that it is eliminated as soon as possible. Your warriors are the best suited for a drop assault".

Celestine: "While it may not be as glorious a charge into the heart of the enemy fleet, your actions here will save the Ophelia system".

Greyfax: "And a far greater threat. If Ophelia VII falls, not only will it spell the end for the Ecclesiarchy and herald a nightmare of intersect wars and fighting, the psychic backwash could rupture reality and drag us all into another raging warp rift".

Gardhelm: "I am aware of what is at stake, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "Good, we do not know exactly what to expect other than the enemy has strong psychic potential. Be on your guard".

(alarm siren going off)

Black Templar: "Detecting multiple energy signatures emerging from behind the largest moon, Marshal".

Gardhelm: "Numbers? Classes? What are the other ships in orbit doing?"

Greyfax: "Perhaps, the enemy is not on the surface. Are the new readings moving toward or away? They might be trying to escape".

Gardhelm: "Get answers now!"

Black Templar: "Six new ships moving on an intercept! All cruiser class and above, at least one of battleship classification. Detecting plasma spikes. Vessels on the far side are accelerating. Also picking up Imperial Navy cypher transmissions".

Greyfax: "It seems the rot has taken hold in the Navy also. I suspect cardinal Kultza's machinations will continue to reveal themselves for years to come".

Celestine: "We still have superiority. The remaining ships from the Order of Our Martyred Lady will arrive within the hour".

Gardhelm: "I disagree, Saint Celestine. My ships are ideal for planetary assault, but in a void war they are outranged and outgunned by these Imperial Navy vessels. If we bring our forces to bear on the ships, we will have nothing for the surface attack. If we assault..."

Greyfax: "The ships will be vulnerable during the drop. Continue with the drop, Marshal".

Gardhelm: "Inquisitor, did you not hear what I said?"

Greyfax: "Whatever is on Ophelia IV must be silenced. If we are not detecting any large scale readings from the surface, we can assume that a small strike force will be sufficient. Bring your ship into orbit, drop what you can and then fight the intercepting ships".

Gardhelm: "We will not be able to provide covering bombardment, Inquisitor".

Celestine: "I do not think it would be of much help. Almost all of Ophelia IV tombs are underground. The surface is still irradiated".

(alarm siren going off)

Black Templar: "We've got incoming torpedoes".

Gardhelm: "Full power to engines and prepare for hard break orbital entry Rapid strike vessels on torpedo intercept! The rest of the fleet, disperse and counter the traitorous Navy vessels. I want the Inculcate Hate ready to attack any drop ships they launch. Transmit to the Order of Our Martyred Lady that we plan a diminished insertion. We need all of their support for orbital battle".

Black Templar: "Aye, Marshal! Emperor Victoris!"

Gardhelm: "You best get ready, Inquisitor. Planetary drop will commence in thirty minutes".

* * *

Greyfax: "You have decided to join us, Centurion Longinus?"

Longinus: "My time has been spent well, Greyfax. I was transmitting the most recent reports in the not unlikely event that neither we nor the fleet escape this entanglement".

Greyfax: "Your confidence is noted, Centurion".

Longinus: "We are relying on you to pinpoint the source of the psychic disruption. We will not have the numbers or firepower for a protracted²³ fight. I do not expect magic bells to aid us this time".

Celestine: "We can take heart from the lack of readings. It seems that this malaise²⁴ has been inflicted upon Ophelia since before our first arrival. Any large force would not have remained hidden for so long".

Greyfax: "There were no conventional surveyor readings to confirm the location, but I am confident we will land within a kilometer of the target. When we are on the surface, we shall evaluate the situation and proceed as appropriate".

(siren going off)

Servitor: "Five minutes to launch".

Celestine: "The ossuary levels are a maze of subterranean tombs and corridors".

Longinus: "I have memorized the layout you provided".

Celestine: "Even if we move unerringly²⁵ towards our foe it is an ideal site for ambushes and traps".

Longinus: "Which is why we will have 100 Black Templars for company. I suggest we allow them to lead the charge".

Celestine: "I would not place another in harm's way to save myself".

Longinus: "I would. You must reframe your perspective, Celestine. This is not a glorious fight for the Emperor. It is a mission to protect Ophelia and hundreds of other star systems. It is defined by success or failure, nothing else".

Greyfax: "Happy is the warrior that can deal in absolutes".

Longinus: "As guardians of the Emperor the Custodians cannot afford anything less than absolute certainty".

Greyfax: "It is not bolt shells and las blasts that concerns me most. Whoever, whatever is perpetrating this psychic attack has the power to influence an entire world, maybe the whole system. If that ability is turned upon us, there's no knowing what might occur. Remain vigilant and be ruthless²⁶".

(siren going off)

Servitor: "Brace for impact! Brace for impact!"

Gardhelm (over vox): "The renegade battleship has pushed hard to intercept us. Three torpedoes have made it through the escort screen".

Celestine: "We must board now".

Servitor: "Impact imminent".

Gardhelm (over vox): "We are detecting further torpedo launch. By the Throne, the enemy has a Nova cannon".

(Celestine, Greyfax and Longinus running to a drop pod)

Gardhelm (over vox): "Torpedoes are a threat, but one Nova cannon hit in the wrong moment could wipe out every drop craft".

Celestine: "We must postpone the launch or risk the whole landing been wiped out".

Greyfax: "No, we cannot afford such a delay".

Longinus: "I agree. Drop us now, Marshal, or we will never get to the surface".

Gardhelm (over vox): "We are still 500 kilometers short of optimal drop".

Greyfax: "Which is less optimal, Marshal, dropping earlier or being blown to pieces by a Nova cannon?"

Longinus: "The impacts were abstemious²⁷. We can still launch".

Gardhelm (over vox): "We've lost void access from the port lodge bay. That's one less Thunderhawk and 20 less warriors for the drop unless we wait to clear the debris".

Greyfax: "Launch, Marshal!"

Celestine: "The Emperor shall watch over us".

Gardhelm (after a pause, over vox): "Ah, as you say, sister Celestine. Launching now".

Servitor: "Prepare for immediate launch".

Longinus: "That is the drop cascades firing. Three squads already are on their way. We are committed now".

Greyfax: "Better than the Marshal's effort to secure orbit for our ships. Our task is straightforward: locate the enemy and execute them swiftly".

Celestine: "No prisoners, Katarinya?"

Greyfax: "We cannot afford to take chances. Every heretic must be hunted down and slain".

Black Templar (over vox): "This is command, we are detecting energy buildup²⁸ in the enemy Nova cannon".

Savior 2 (over vox): "Everyone, lock down. This is Savior 2 command, launching now".

Celestine: "God of Terra, reach out your hand to shield us! Reach out your will to guide us".

Greyfax: "Praying? I've never seen the appeal, oh!"

(Nova cannon shot passing wide and shaking the craft)

Savior 2 (over vox): "We are undamaged. Stay lock down".

Gardhelm (over vox): "Nova cannon impact, starboard gun decks. Launch now while they reload".

Longinus: "What about the drop pods, Marshal? Is the first wave intact?"

Gardhelm (over vox): "We are safely inbound to the surface. Go now with the God Emperor's wrath as your companion".

* * *

Savior 2 (over vox): "Savior 2 ascending to fire support patrol! Ave Imperator!"
(drop craft taking flight)

Celestine (almost silent): "Graves of my sisters. I can feel their souls buried with their bones. Four thousand years of our greatest leaders interred²⁹ beneath the blessed earth, from which the temple of the savior Emperor sprang. This is what called to us, Katarinya, their torment at the corruption of their spirit".

Greyfax: "I can sense it too, Celestine. The corruption is like a great weight upon the warp, bending everything around it".

Longinus: "Focus on the mission. Auspex readings are clear. What is your status, Marshal Gardhelm?"

Gardhelm (over vox): "Perimeter secured, Centurion, second wave incoming. Clear landing area".

Greyfax: "This is the mission. It is not simply because it is over abandonment that the enemy has made the lair on the Ophelia IV. It is a loadstone³⁰ of psychic energy".

Longinus: "So the warp potential generated here is being perverted to corrupt the warp potential that exists on Ophelia VII?"

Greyfax: "Which in turn will spread like a plague to other systems, each world that falls further stretching the ridge of the Great Rift. A cascade of corruption that will fuel a terrifying expanse of the warp storms".

Celestine: "The worst of blasphemies, to turn our faith against us".

Greyfax: "Yes, a servant of the dark powers has found the way to pervert the warp essence generated by veneration³¹ of the Emperor. This is far worse than I ever envisaged back on Terra".

Celestine: "And yet would this have been made possible without Deacis's action? Instability and poisoned ambition have fueled this attack, aided if not instigated by the Lord Ecclesiarch's annulment of the Decree Passive".

Greyfax: "He is possessed of a different source of ambition, to see his name remembered in great legacy. It is likely that what he heard and saw confirmed his desire to become a war leader".

Longinus: "If these acts require an existing surge of faith to enact, that would explain how we were unable to detect the Alpha level psyker that appeared on Terra. He did not reach his full potential until he stood on the psychically charged grounds of the cathedral of the Ascendancy".

Celestine: "You speak in clinical terms, Centurion. Bereft of the terrible truth our prayers, our hymns, the blessings we lay upon our weapons and ships will be tainted and abused by the servants of darkness. This is not a distant strategy of galactic dominion, but an attempt to sunder³² us from the font of our power, to turn our love of the God Emperor into slavery to the Ruinous Powers".

Savior 2 (over vox): "Multiple heat signatures detected in sector 11. Powered-armor infantry only, closing at speed".

Longinus: "Alpha legionaries, our arrival has finally been noticed".

Greyfax: "Engage the enemy immediately. We must breach the catacombs without delay".

Savior 2 (over vox): "Acknowledged, engaging targets".

Gardhelm (over vox): "Squad Abdurant are moving to secure the left flank. Heavy weapons fire incoming. Auspex report show enemy reinforcements are heading towards us".

Savior 2 (over vox): "They are moving underground. We have no targets".

Longinus: "Can you feel the source of the psychic disruption any more clearly, Inquisitor?"

(Greyfax using psyker abilities)

(sorcerers and cultists muttering incantations)

Greyfax: "About three hundred meters ahead, twenty meters down".

Longinus: "Then I know where they are. There is a gateway 200 meters ahead, 50 meters to the right behind that ruined marble colonnade. We need to secure the entrance and sweep the defenders".

Greyfax: "You seem very confident, Centurion".

Longinus: "From the records you showed me, Celestine, we are close to the sacrosanctus Dominica".

Celestine: "The tomb of Alicia Dominica. It is the holiest site of the ossuary shrine".

Longinus: "Exactly. That's why I would use it to power a spell of corruption".

Greyfax: "An odd choice phrase".

Longinus: "The Adeptus Custodes are raised not just to react to the enemy, but to predict their every possible move. It is more than a simple deduction of facts. It is a means to place ourselves within the thoughts of our foes. I would say that a Custodian spends as much time thinking about how he would assassinate the Emperor as he does contemplating³³ anything else".

Celestine: "There is a procession that leads more directly to the sacrosanctus Dominica".

Longinus: "Which will be well guarded, Celestine. The gateway I speak of is an old supply port used by non-clergy. It is deliberately discreet³⁴".

(Alpha legionaries opening fire)

Longinus: "You should move ahead. I'll provide support fire".

Greyfax (shooting back): "No we must stay together. We need to push on to the entrance. The longer we wait, the further the ritual progresses. Savior 2, any auspex readings from beyond the gateway in sector 1?"

Savior 2 (over vox): "Negative, no readings bellows the gates".

Gardhelm (over vox): "Second wave arrival in five, four, three, two, one".

(Black Templars' drop pods landing)

(furious battle erupting)

Black Templars (altogether): "No pity! No remorse! No fear! Ave Imperator Dominus! Death to the heretics! To purge is to be pure!"

(newly arrived Space Marines charging into battle)

Gardhelm (over vox): "Second wave landing successful. Inquisitor, what is your command?"

Greyfax: "Secure the drop site and then follow us into the catacombs".

Celestine: "I shall cut a path".

Longinus: "What happened to letting the Space Marines lead the charge?"

Greyfax: "Speed is more important. They can watch our backs instead".

Celestine (over vox): "I see the gate, just as you said, Centurion".

Longinus: "I see the gateway but how do we open it?"

Celestine (over vox): "With the word of the Emperor of course. I shall transmit the codes, Indomitus... Oh... I see movement, enemy ambush".

(Greyfax moaning)

Celestine (over vox): "Are you hit, Katarinya?"

Greyfax: "No, not seriously just stone splinters".

(cultists and traitor legionaries erupting from underground)

Greyfax: "The sorcery is masking... There I see them!"

Longinus: "Another in the rubble using an anti-auspex cloak".

(Longinus killing another traitor with a las shot)

Celestine (over vox): "The last of them chokes on his final breath".

(Celestine approaching)

Celestine: "Indomitus Substantia! Imperator Rex Eternis Astra! Supplicatum Sorrowitas! Ex Mortis Diem!"

(Celestine opening the door)

Greyfax: "You know the way, Centurion, lead on".

* * *

(Longinus, Celestine and Greyfax treading along the catacombs in menacing silence)

Longinus: "Endless catacombs of skulls and bones. It is as if you revel³⁵ in the demise of your sisters, Celestine".

Celestine: "A commemoration of their lives, Longinus, not a celebration of their deaths. The bones of saints, martyrs and leaders of the sisterhood have been interred on Ophelia IV for three and a half thousands years".

Greyfax: "Even before the sisterhood this world was steeped in death. It was the seat of the Conclave Belacorum, one of the cardinal worlds responsible for the deployment and command of the Frateris Templars of the Ecclesiarchy. Those ancient orders that sent millions to their deaths still echo here".

Celestine: "Which is why it was subjected to atomic scouring³⁶ in the latter years of the Reign of Blood. Vandire's corruption had turned its organization into a depraved³⁷, bloodthirsty war machine. The cardinals sanguine were intent on overthrowing Sebastian Thor".

Longinus: "You speak of history, but for me these events are memory.

Followers of Thor and the Imperial Navy turned the world into a radioactive wasteland thinking it would please Him. Why would the sisterhood choose the place as their shrine tomb?"

Celestine: "Great wrongs were perpetrated³⁸ from this world but it had once been a beckon of hope, a bastion of the temple of the savior Emperor. With our bones we reconsecrate this ground to the glory of the God Emperor".

Gardhelm (over vox): "We have a cordon above ground, one hundred meters around your entry point. Another entrance has been secured in sector 3. Enemy moving on your position underground".

(distant explosion, debris falling from the ceiling)

Longinus: "We need to keep moving".

Greyfax: "Wait! As much as I think you are right about the sacrosanctus Dominica. I need to see for myself. Guard me while I seek their psychic essence".

(Greyfax using psyker abilities)

Greyfax: "The chuff of battle, where are you hiding? Where? Strong, so strong... Three millennia of faith and superstition locked into the warp... Closer... Torment, such perversion of spirit... These heretics will burn for this".

Celestine (in the distance): "Katarinya, we are running out of time".

Longinus (in the distance): "Auspex signals have enemy approaching from left and right".

Greyfax: "Almost have them..."

Greater Demon (muttering barely recognizably): "From the darkness springs light. From the past springs life. What zea accorass ankwak. The blue flame shall burn bright again".

Greyfax: "Blue flame..."

Celestine: "What did you say?"

Greyfax: "I have found them, cultists of the eight-turned god. They are servants of the Tyrant of the Blue Flame".

Celestine: "The demon that enslaved Ophelia?"

Longinus: "This isn't just about polluting the psychic emanations of Ophelia. The Alpha legionaries are going to unleash a demonic incursion".

Greyfax: "The last time the Tyrant of the Blue Flame manifested it took a whole Space Marine crusade led by the Primarch to defeat it".

Celestine: "Yet we are here and shall prevail. We have been brought to this place to stop a terrible evil. Praise the God Emperor".

* * *

(explosion)

Longinus (opening fire): "Quickly, Inquisitor. I have them".

Greyfax: "The next chamber, the taint is like a wall. I have to push through".

Longinus: "Clear!"

Celestine: "I am the blade of the God Emperor! No barrier can hold me back".

Longinus: "Eh, lightning from that archway on the left. Even I can feel the impression of their demonic power".

(Celestine, Longinus and Katarinya going on a run)

Greyfax: "We have no time to waste. That pressure is the Tyrant of the Blue Flame trying to break through. If it arrives..."

Celestine: "When last they came, the demons slaughtered more than half of Ophelia's population. The Tyrant's existence twisted the ground and corrupted the temples themselves".

Longinus: "It is the mutating power of the warp incarnate, a Greater Demon of change. If we cannot stop its summoning, we haven't the strength between us to banish it".

Greyfax: "Then we cannot allow it to..."

Longinus (interrupting): "Get back!"

(a nearby explosion)

Celestine: "Unholy fire!"

Longinus (moaning): "Oh... Like a warp flame during the first attack on Terra".

Greyfax: "Even more powerful. Get behind me, I shall do my best to shield us from the next attack".

Longinus: "No, Katarinya. I shall..."

Greyfax (ordering psychically): "Behind me! Swiftly now!"

(Greyfax moaning)

Longinus: "More Alpha legionaries!"

Celestine: "The wrath of the God Emperor has come for you, heretics!"

(Celestine, Longinus and Katarinya charging the legionaries in melee)

Celestine: "Only two of them. I cent get into the chamber beyond".

Greyfax: "Celestine, wait!"

Celestine: "I see them! Three corrupted psykers, sorcerers of the heretic Astartes".

Longinus: "Your leg, Greyfax!"

Greyfax: "Will heal, help Celestine".

Celestine (screaming in horror): "Oh, the flames. They've set a fire in my soul! AAAAAAAAAA!"

Longinus: "Celestine!"

Greyfax (spitting words): "Suffer not the heretic to live!"

* * *

Longinus: "Ah, the warp flames have trapped Celestine like she's caught in stasis. I can't get to her. The flames thrust me back".

Greater Demon: "Kee letyano tlanet akawerki dorush ok kunan korush do nelitsan. Ektsil dash kor".

Greyfax: "Three sorcerers standing beyond her, just ignoring us. Longinus, why do you not open fire?"

Longinus: "See for yourself".

(Longinus unleashing a bolt round, that is deflected by an invisible shield)

Longinus: "This witch light... It robs my round of their charge".

Greyfax: "We shall see if the blessed ammunition of my bolter is more effective".

(Greyfax unleashing a salvo of shots with the same effect)

Greater Demon (voice changing to Celestine's and back): "It is the ritual from the prison of the righteous. Akna renservish agnak orob kar".

Longinus: "That voice... The Tyrant is using Celestine as its conduit".

Greyfax: "I can feel it getting closer. It is almost here".

Greater Demon and Celestine: "Her faith feeds me. She has strong will. Her soul will power my transition to your realm. Tu kak anfofa mortza mak amatulsh gok ishka arkakol".

Greyfax: "Celestine, fight its power! You breached his defenses before. You can stop him now".

(Celestine screaming, her voice distorted)

(Greater Demon laughing)

Greater Demon and Celestine: "Where are you prayers now, servant of the false god? Duk akshatzin atuk naphoph ashatzin pot kas".

(Celestine screaming, her voice distorted)

Greyfax: "By the Throne I will not let this happen".

Greater Demon and Celestine: "I shall make you fall, slave".

(Greater Demon unleashing warp flames)

Greyfax: "Oh..."

Longinus: "I cannot get near the summoners either".

Greater Demon and Celestine: "You flesh will melt beneath my will and your soul, your sweet soul, will quench³⁹ my thirst for but a moment. Orok tov tsagon morek isha anuph, uph isha tsagon morek toph".

(Celestine screaming, her voice distorted)

Gardhelm (over vox): "Inquisitor, we are facing a renewed attack through sectors 4 and 5. Estimate time until we are overrun at five minutes".

Greyfax (over vox): "Hold for as long as you can".

Gardhelm (over vox): "Acknowledged, terminus extremis! To slay in the Emperor's name is to be divine".

Longinus: "The flames, Greyfax! I see a saint forming in them".

Greyfax: "The Tyrant of the Blue Flame is corrupting Celestine's angelic incarnation. Her wings become dark tatters, her halo an eight-pointed star..."

(Celestine screaming, her voice distorted)

Greyfax: "We cannot defeat this foe with mortal weapons. Stand ready, Centurion, and strike swiftly when you can".

Longinus: "Behind you".

(sorcerer charging Greyfax)

Gardhelm (over vox): "You hope to defeat a Lord of Change? You cannot match its psychic power".

Greyfax: "I may have a chance before it is fully manifest".

(Greyfax using psyker abilities)

Greyfax (praying to the Emperor): "Keep me safe... I think I will have some help".

* * *

(Greyfax and Tyrant in the warp)

Greater Demon (laughing): "Ahahaha, foolish. This is the realm of the magic, the world of my lord. Are trying to hasten your demise?"

Greyfax: "I will not let you take her".

Greater Demon: "It is too late, witch of the emperor-corpse. When I have drained her soul, I will devour yours too. Can you feel them, beings of mortals with their fingers locked around each other's throats? Their naked ambition and desperate hope is a beacon to me. And you are kind enough to bring me a portal".

Greyfax: "Celestine! Celestine! I feel you! She is not finished yet".

(angelic chant emerging at the background)

Greater Demon: "And will you stop me? You have no filthy shield of dead souls to protect you now... Ahahaha".

Greyfax: "Oh, come back to us, Celestine! The Emperor is not done with you".

Greater Demon: "She cannot hear you, child of false faith".

(demon unleashing warp flame at Greyfax)

Greyfax: "Ah, the Emperor has need of you, Celestine! This is not the end".

Celestine (in normal voice): "I am lost, Katarinya! In this darkness and fire"

Greater Demon: "No, she is mine. The world of shrines shall be mine again".

Greyfax: "Come back to me, Celestine. Listen to the prayers of your sisters. Their strength is your strength. Their faith is your faith".

(angelic chanting getting louder)

Greyfax: "Your sisters are waiting for you, Celestine. Reach out to them".

Greater Demon: "No!"

(demon unleashing warp flame at Greyfax)

Greyfax (laughing): "Yes, throw your ire at me, spawn of the muted! Vent40 your anger upon me!"

Greater Demon: "You cannot defeat me, mortal".

Greyfax: "I do not have to, demon. I just needed to distract you".

Celestine (regaining conscience): "Katarinya, I see you. I feel them".

Greyfax: "Call to them, Celestine. Call to your sisters in death".

Greater Demon: "NO!"

(angelic chanting getting even louder)

Celestine: "Cursed are the unholy, my sisters! Purge this sanctuary of its taint!"

Greater Demon (roaring): "NOOOOOO!"

Greyfax: "Now, Centurion! Strike now with all your wrath".

Longinus: "I cannot see them. The flames still shroud the sorcerers".

Greyfax: "Not the summoners, Centurion! The conduit! Celestine! The Tyrant of the Blue Flame cannot be allowed to use her as its vessel!"

Longinus: "Kill the Living Saint?"

Greyfax: "Now, Longinus, cast your spear and end this!"

Longinus: "If she dies, the demon will use her body to manifest. There must be another way".

Greyfax: "Have some faith, Longinus".

(Longinus charging and slaying Celestine)

(Celestine screaming in pain)

Longinus: "The flames die out".

(Celestine's body collapsing to the ground)

Greyfax (running towards the Living Saint): "Celestine!"

Longinus: "The sorcerers, Greyfax, the mission is not yet finished".

Sorcerer: "Interloper41! You will pay for this insult!"

(Longinus and sorcerers engaging in melee combat)

Sorcerer: "You cannot defeat the eight-turned god".

Greyfax: "I do not have to, only you".

(Greyfax hitting the sorcerer to death)

Sorcerer (moaning): "You... cannot... kill... me..."

(Longinus slaying the sorcerer)

Longinus: "I see your true face, traitor! A weak weird mortal, nothing more".

Another Sorcerer (impaling Longinus with a dagger): "You will pay with your lives for your interference! Face the power of the eight-turned god".

Greyfax: "I do not fear death!"

(Greyfax charging the second sorcerer)

Gardhelm: "Oh, Inquisitor, stay low!"

(Gardhelm unleashing a salvo of bolt rounds, killing the second sorcerer)

Longinus: "Oh, a timely arrival, Marshal".

Greyfax (falling to the knees): "It is done, the summoning halted. The spell of mayhem unbound".

* * *

Gardhelm: "The enemy has pulled back from the inner catacombs. My squads are pursuing".

Greyfax: "Good, how fares the battle in orbit?"

Gardhelm: "My castellans have initiated boarding actions against the traitor battleship. The fight continues".

Greyfax: "I am confident the Black Templars and Order of Our Martyred Lady will prevail. You should lead your brethren in the hunt. We are safe here".

Gardhelm: "No heretic will escape Ophelia IV. Tempestum Bellum Acto Vingus Imperator".

(Gardhelm taking his leave)

Longinus: "The enemy has been stopped. The Tyrant of the Blue Flame was banished (taking the dagger from his breast plate) I fell sullied⁴² that Celestine died by my hand".

Greyfax: "Do not be. I cannot count the number of loyal servants of the Emperor that have died by my command, sacrificed to protect the Imperium".

Longinus: "By your command, yes. But how many died directly by your hand?"

Celestine (coming back to life): "Ahhhh...."

Longinus (shocked): "Emperor's tears..."

Greyfax: "I am surprised at this gap in your knowledge, Centurion".

Longinus: "What gap? No blood spilled from the wound. My blow was mortal. This cannot be".

Greyfax: "She is a Living Saint".

Celestine: "Oh, the God Emperor guided your hand, Longinus. Do not feel ashamed at being his divine instrument".

Longinus: "By the Throne! I've seen my companions return from wounds that would kill lesser warriors, but never a soul returned across the veil".

Celestine: "My penance⁴³ continues. The God Emperor still has need of his blade. My task here is not yet complete".

Greyfax: "What do you mean? Without the influence of the sorcerers' malignant⁴⁴ spell the Ophelia system will be soon cleansed. The Cicatrix Maledictum will not expand to Terra".

Celestine: "In my moments between life and death I saw afresh visions that took me to Terra. I understand better that which the God Emperor desired of me. If I had understood sooner, much bloodshed would have been avoided".

Gardhelm (over vox): "The void war turns in our favor, Inquisitor. My warriors have returned control of the battleship to officers loyal to the Emperor. Other renegade ships are scattering. The landing zone is secure. I'll have a gunship ready for when you need it".

Greyfax: "My gratitude, Marshal. You have done the Emperor's work and shall be remembered in the rolls of your Chapter".

Gardhelm (over vox): "When Ophelia VII is purged of its invaders, we will hunt down those that perpetrated the attack. The crusade never ends, Inquisitor".

Greyfax: "I also have much work to do. Once I have retrieved Kyrillos, there's the matter of Kultza's taint upon his diocese. I will be travelling to Atromesta".

Longinus: "I will stay in your company, Greyfax".

Celestine: "What of your duty to guard the Emperor?"

Longinus: "As you have both shown me, there is more to defending the Emperor than standing sentry at his gate".

Greyfax: "A Centurion of the Companions will be a helpful ally, I am sure".

Longinus: "Then it seems we are all bound for Ophelia VII".

Celestine: "That is good. The Ecclesiarch has been instrumental in this calamity. I should have seen that earlier. He must face the consequences of his actions".

Greyfax: "Indeed, by what authority would you punish him?"

Celestine: "Do you accept it yet, Katarinya? You know the authority that guides my hand, do you not?"

Greyfax: "The will of the God Emperor".

* * *

Kyrillos: "And another, Lord Ecclesiarch! This is to grant permission to cardinal Ulthuso to assemble a regiment of Frateris Templars to accompany the Missionaria Galaxia expedition into the wayward void beyond Inrocksi sector".

Deacis: "Thank you, Kyrillos. You are an efficient administrator. I can see why Inquisitor Greyfax made such good use of you".

Kyrillos: "Speaking of which she should be..."

(trumpets chiming at the entrance)

Herald: "The Living Saint Celestine, Inquisitor Greyfax and Centurion Longinus, Your Holiness"

(door opening)

Deacis: "Ah, come in! Come in! Oh, my deepest likes and heartiest congratulations to you all. Celestine, blessed sister! Truly the God Emperor guides you upon the path".

Celestine: "Indeed, he does, Lord Ecclesiarch! It is by his light that I arrive again before you".

Greyfax: "Ecclesiarch Deacis, Kyrillos informs me that you have been dispatching messages to recruit millions of Frateris Templars across the Imperium. Quite an army you are raising".

Deacis: "Has he indeed? He would know. He drafted most of the ordinances⁴⁵".

Longinus: "Not all threats to the Emperor cleave⁴⁶ to dark powers nor seek to destroy him outwardly⁴⁷. There are those that are unintentional, the consequences of forgetting the lessons of humility and sacrifice that bind the Imperium together".

Deacis: "That sounds like an accusation, Centurion. You are far from your jurisdiction. Be aware of that fact".

Kyrillos: "I am just going to step over her".

Celestine: "Four thousand years ago the first of the sisterhood – Saint Alicia Dominica – stood before an Ecclesiarch and said these words. You have committed the ultimate heresy. Not only have you turned your back on the Emperor and stepped from his light, you have profaned⁴⁸ his name and almost destroyed everything he has striven to build".

Deacis: "I have done nothing wrong".

Celestine: "You have perverted and twisted the path has laid for mankind to tread".

Deacis: "You are still a battle sister, Celestine. I am your Ecclesiarch".

Celestine: "As your own decrees have stated, there can be no mercy for such a crime, no pity for such a criminal".

Deacis (stepping back in fear): "No! No-no-no, this is outrageous! I am a High Lord of Terra! Greyfax, surely you do not condone⁴⁹ this. The sisters of battle cannot be alorum to themselves"

Celestine: "I renounce your lordship. You walk in the darkness and cannot be allowed to live".

Deacis (scared): "I am Ecclesiarch. I am the Imperial Church and the word of the God Emperor incarnate".

Celestine: "Your sentence has been long overdue and it is now time for you to die".

Deacis (sobbing hysterically): "G-g-g-greyfax!!! S-s-s-stop her!!! Think of the Imperium".

Celestine: "What do you say, Katarinya?"

Greyfax: "As an Inquisitor of the Ordo Hereticus I judge this be a purely internal matter of the Adeptus Ministorum. Come, Kyrillos, Longinus. We have no further business here".

(Greyfax, Kyrillos and Longinus leaving the chambers)

(Celestine unsheathing her blade)

(Deacis crying in fear)

(Celestine finishing the Ecclesiarch in one swift blow ending his scream)