

WARHAMMER
40,000



TO SPEAK AS ONE
AN ADEPTUS MECHANICUS STORY

GUY HALEY

WARHAMMER
40,000



TO SPEAK AS ONE
AN ADEPTUS MECHANICUS STORY

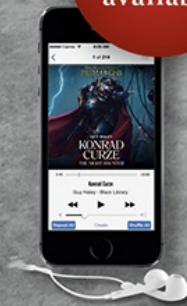
GUY HALEY

BLACK LIBRARY

To see the full Black Library range visit
blacklibrary.com



Multiple
formats
available



MP3 AUDIOBOOKS | BOOKS | EBOOKS

CONTENTS

Cover

To Speak as One – Guy Haley

About the Author

An Extract from ‘Servants of the Machine-God’

A Black Library Publication

eBook license

TO SPEAK AS ONE

Guy Haley

‘What is this?’ Inquisitor Cehen-qui unrolled the message scrip and pulled it through his hands. Paper rasped on his soft gloves. As he read the message again, his expression grew more incredulous. His fine brows narrowed. His glossy black topknot fell from his shoulder and laid itself across his shining white tunic.

Four of Cehen-qui’s most important staff attended the inquisitor. The first was a small, bald figure of non-specific gender. Callow had no title. Factotum was the closest word for what Callow did. Callow fetched, Callow carried, Callow smoothed away the irritations of the day. Cehen-qui expected little more than that, so it was Callow’s great misfortune that they’d been given the message to deliver.

Callow blinked nervously. ‘It is an astropathic message, my lord, from the Archmagos Dominus Belisarius Cawl.’

‘I can see that, you fool,’ Cehen-qui snapped. ‘And stop cringing.’ He reread the message for the third time before screwing it up and throwing it down onto the deck of the station command centre. The paper rolled in and out of shadow as it passed under broken lumens, then fell down a hole left by a missing plate. ‘Who by the Sacred Throne of Terra does he think he is?’ He straightened his very white gloves.

‘My lord?’ said Callow, in some distress.

The second attendant, a tall man of late middle years, at least in appearance, shifted the heavy book he carried and laid a calming hand on Callow’s arm. He shook his head. Don’t say anything else, he meant to convey. Callow didn’t notice.

‘Who does he think he is to demand our prisoner?’ Cehen-qui continued. ‘Who

does he think he is that he can command the Emperor's Inquisition, the *Inquisition*,' he growled, 'to do his bidding like that?' He clapped his hands together. His gloves muffled the sound. The gold braid on his jacket swung violently. Callow flinched.

'What do you think of him, Gamma?' Cehen-qui asked his third attendant.

Gamma was an adept of the Machine Cult. He wore black robes fringed with golden cog teeth. His augmetics, most obvious of which were a pair of heavy industrial claws poised over his shoulders, were plated gold to match. His armour was a very deep red, with the smallest accents of cream. His forge world was so obscure that few would have recognised the colours. He liked it that way.

His full name was Frenk Gamma-87-Nu-3-Psi. Cehen-qui never used it.

'He is a heretic and a blasphemer,' said Gamma firmly. 'He pollutes the Ommissiah's work with his meddling. He makes free use of xenos technology, and,' his voice thickened with disgust, 'he conducts original research. We cannot give him the aeldari. Who knows what perfidious use he will put it to.'

The second servant, whose name was Valeneez, sucked in a breath between unevenly spaced teeth. He had been in Cehen-qui's service longer than any of the others.

'I disagree, Frenk, and respectively with you, my lord. His communique bears the seal of Lord Regent Roboute Guilliman himself. Technically, there is a case to be made for the legitimacy of the archmagos dominus' request.'

'Cawl is a puppet of the usurper,' said Gamma. His bloodshot eyes glared above his respirator mask. His augmetics made an angry clicking.

'Gamma has a point,' Cehen-qui said. 'While I believe the returned primarch to be true to the cause of human survival, Lord Guilliman has no more right to command the Inquisition than Cawl has. To whom is the Inquisition answerable, Valeneez?'

'The Emperor Himself,' said Valeneez deferentially. 'But the Lord Guilliman is the Emperor's son, and His appointed deputy, ruling in His stead, so therefore it is reasonable to—'

'Appointed by whom?' said Cehen-qui loudly. The few crew on the command deck tried very hard not to listen in. 'We only have his word that the Emperor gave him this role. Of course,' he said, tugging his coat into place, 'his right to command the armies of the Imperium in defence and reconquest of the Emperor's domains is indisputable, but command the Inquisition, whose operations he has actively worked against? Never. The primarch's authority in this matter will not stand. The prisoner remains where he is, imprisoned, until

the excrutiators from Cypra Largo arrive.'

'If we assume you are right...' began Valeneez.

'I am right!' Cehen-qui shouted. He tapped at the Inquisitorial badge pinned to his sash. 'This says I am right.'

'Well then, my lord, given that you are right,' Valeneez said, 'we are not in a good position. This station has not been occupied for some time, most of its systems are offline, we've multiple blind spots, not enough storm troopers to patrol it, and a barely functioning weapons grid. If we stay here we are leaving ourselves open to attack. We should take the prisoner elsewhere.'

'Maybe,' said Cehen-qui, becoming thoughtful. He looked out of the long slit window overlooking the station's three prongs. The orange gas giant it orbited filled much of the view beyond. 'Cawl is a maverick. If we do not give him what he wants, then the danger is that he will attempt to take it from us. However, we cannot change the rendezvous. None of our messages to Inquisitor-Castellan DelGrani have got through the warp storms. We must assume that the ship is still coming, and will be here within the week. The prisoner cannot get free. He must be presented to excrutiators with the appropriate abilities as soon as is possible. His own kind will be looking for him. We must be ready to stop Cawl. I will not have the prisoner's knowledge fall into the hands of the Adeptus Mechanicus. We might be exposed, but we are not without our own weapons now, are we, ShoShonai?'

He turned to his fourth servant. She stayed off the few spots where the deck was properly illuminated. She stood totally silent, face downcast.

'ShoShonai, I am speaking to you,' Cehen-qui said. 'Are you ready?'

She lifted her head. Her face was shadowed by her hood. Silvered eyes shone in the dark. 'My lord,' she said with a voice of inhuman quality. The cloth of her robe moved disturbingly, as if a nest of serpents writhed beneath. 'We are ready.'

'My lord!' one of Cehen-qui's minions called from the etheric monitoring station.

'What is it?' Cehen-qui said.

'I have a warp signature on the edge of the system.'

'Any indication of provenance?'

'Datapulse signum identifier will not reach us for another four hours, my lord, but etheric waveform patterning suggests a vessel of middling gravitic draught.'

'Well then,' said Cehen-qui briskly. 'They're here. To action stations, everyone. They shall take our prize over my dead body. If that happens, I'll make sure the rest of you die first.'

Otranti was a gas giant of a vivid shade of orange, with a fuzzy atmospheric boundary. It reminded Primus of a rare fruit he'd tried thousands of years ago, the albaricoque. It had been velvety and sweet. He had liked it.

He tried to remember if that had been one of the last things that had moved him.

The station was a bright dot against the equator, and growing fast.

'Interesting,' said Qvo-87.

'Interesting?' said Alpha Primus. His purple lips were downturned. Only the slight raise to his voice's pitch indicated he was, in fact, interested in what Qvo had to say. Even so, he sounded like he was on the cusp of crippling ennui.

'This facility is very poorly defended,' Qvo went on. A small forest of pistons lifted his command cradle up so that he could peer into a set of displays hidden behind rubber viewing visors, forcing Primus out of the way. The command deck of the *0-101-0* was too tight for the Space Marine. Qvo's command crew were bulky creatures, high-level magi possessing many extra limbs. None looked remotely human any more, and although Primus could feel the flickering of humanity within their metal bodies, his eyes insisted they were not people, but ugly idols to the Machine-God. They were creatures with steel souls.

Primus was the first to acknowledge he was as artificial as them himself, everything about him having been rewritten down to the genetic level. The big difference between he and they was that they had chosen to be the way they were. He most definitely had not. Thinking about it made his scars itch, and as much of Primus' skin was scar tissue, the experience was unpleasant, so he stopped thinking about it. He cleared his mind as easily as switching off a lumen. Blankness took the place of irksome thought, until Qvo started gabbling again.

'Interesting, interesting, interesting,' said Qvo. It was impossible to tell where the magos ended and the ship began. Primus had known all the iterations of Qvo. He still wasn't sure if he was a machine or not.

'You will not provoke more interest in me by repeating the word interesting,' said Primus. His voice was low and miserable as a leaden bell. 'You are irritatingly predictable.'

'I am, aren't I?' said Qvo brightly. 'I do wish that the Archmagos Dominus Belisarius Cawl had seen fit to give me a broader range of self-determinative logic patterning.' He gave Primus a mock-serious look. 'But that would break the lore.'

'I care not at all that your red-robed brethren would find you an abomination,' said Primus.

‘Lucky me, I am unique,’ said Qvo. He spoke distractedly, flitting on hissing pistons between screens and interface ports. He hummed a few bars of an ancient tune, and stopped. Primus lifted his heavy head. Qvo tapped away on a brass claviboard with four of his hands. Green logic code scrolled down a wafer-thin glass screen.

‘Are you going to give me the appropriate data to accomplish my mission or not?’ said Primus.

‘I am hoping it will not come to that.’

‘When our dear master is involved, it always comes to *that*,’ said Primus. ‘We are here. I shall be fighting. It is never any other way. Why this place? We are asking for trouble.’

‘Ahem.’ Qvo cleared his throat preparatory to speaking. The noise was entirely synthetic; only his head appeared to be organic, therefore he probably had no throat. If Primus was honest, he was mildly curious about what parts of Qvo were flesh and what were not, but asking the infuriating pseudo-magos would have felt like a defeat, so he never did. That, like so much else, annoyed him.

‘Because this station has the exact combination of circumstances that will allow us to secure what we need without anybody finding out about it, that’s why,’ said Qvo. ‘It is a genius plan on the part of the archmagos.’

Qvo pulled a number of levers. A high-detail hololith in far-spectrum colours sprang up in the middle of the bridge. Primus ducked a hissing pipe to get a better view, coming to stand to the front of Qvo.

Primus’ eyes possessed the spectral spread to see the hololith. Qvo knew that, Primus knew Qvo knew; presenting the diagram in such exotic shades was his way of making some kind of point. Qvo always seemed to be making a point. Primus was often at a loss as to why, or indeed what the point was.

The station had an unusual configuration: a tall cylinder topped with a wide disc with three long, boxy limbs pointing towards the gas giant, the spread of which was contained within forty-five degrees. It looked like a primitive wheel with all but three of the spokes broken off. The rear of the hub had a bulge fringed by the piers of a modest dock. A single ship was berthed there: swift, deadly and highly technologically advanced, with a superstructure surmounted by a gilded Inquisitorial ‘I’ surrounded by lightning bolts.

‘The station is an ex-void dungeon,’ Qvo said. ‘Run by the Ordo Xenos to imprison and interrogate xenos captives. The number of different types of containment unit it boasts is quite fascinating, with facilities to hold life forms of extreme sorts – high-pressure beings, high-G, non-water-based life, non-carbon-

based life, gaseous entities, beings both transdimensional and temporally unstable, warp sensitive and warp native, even—

Primus' fist clenched involuntarily. 'It's a prison for aliens. I understand. Please continue.'

'It *was* a prison for aliens,' corrected Qvo. 'It has not been in use for several hundred years.' The hololith zoomed out until it incorporated a tri-D light model of Otranti. Qvo depressed a button with an unnecessary flourish. A decaying orbital track was projected onto the image. 'Behold! A decaying orbital track,' he said, also unnecessarily, as Primus could clearly see it for what it was. 'It looks to me like this moon here...' More images flickered on. A small moon was outlined in a shade only visible to creatures with infrared sensitive vision. '... was hit by an asteroid – you see the debris about it?'

Primus did see. It was blindingly obvious. Qvo was beginning to give him a headache.

'The moon's orbit is not where it should be. Its gravitic interference has perturbed the facility's orbit. Cosmic billiards, if you will.'

'What's billiards?'

'Never mind,' said Qvo.

'It must not have been very important, or the Ordo Xenos would have corrected the fault,' said Primus.

'Or,' said Qvo smugly, 'it is very, very important. Bringing out the kind of vessel required to pull the station back into a stable anchor, or a construction barge to fit it with engines to allow it to do the task itself, would require the requisition of a great deal of men and materials. Even were the workforce liquidated in its entirety, the news would get out. The station's secrecy would be compromised. Did you not think of that?'

'Politicking and secrecy are the methods of cowards,' said Primus. 'They are not my way.'

'You're more of a direct mass strike sort of man, aren't you?' said Qvo. 'I wonder what they were doing there? I wonder why they have come here now?'

'The prisoner,' said Primus.

'Yes, but if they wanted only to interrogate it, then why not take it to another facility? Why this one? Because if there is one thing more secret than a top-secret facility, it's an abandoned top-secret facility. Something's afoot here. How exciting!'

'You are like a child.'

'A child's curiosity and enthusiasm gives the energy of a star to any inquiry,'

said Qvo. ‘You must learn to enjoy your work.’

‘I enjoy nothing,’ said Primus.

‘That’s not true. I know you like killing people.’

‘Like is too strong,’ said Primus. ‘Combat alleviates boredom. That is all.’

The station in the oculus proper had grown in size from a glint to a round of light. Primus stiffened, and took a few steps forward towards the armourglass.

‘What is it?’ asked Qvo.

‘There’s a psyker on the station, a powerful one,’ said Primus.

‘You can handle that,’ said Qvo. ‘The archmagos made you powerful too.’

‘This one feels different,’ said Primus.

‘How?’

‘There is more than one voice to the mind.’

Qvo disengaged himself from some of the cables. Not many, only enough to allow him to be carried forward on tentacles of banded steel until he was beside Primus; otherwise he remained joined to the ship as thoroughly as if he were a component. He adjusted his elevation so his face was level with Primus’.

‘Can you be more specific?’ asked Qvo.

‘No.’ Primus felt the smallest twitch at the corner of his mouth.

‘Are you smiling? Are you well?’ said Qvo, with genuine concern.

Primus wasn’t listening. The being on the station knew he was coming. A brightness in his witch-sight flashed, then went dark. He was being actively blocked.

‘This could almost be interesting,’ Primus said.

‘We are being hailed by the approaching vessel,’ reported one of Cehen-qui’s followers. The inquisitor did not have anything as specialised as a vox-master. All his troops were expected to be flexible and well versed in multiple arts. All but his four principal servants – Callow, Valeneez, Gamma and ShoShonai – were dressed in identical uniforms, as fuliginous as Cehen-qui’s robes were white.

‘Make them wait,’ said Cehen-qui.

‘As you command, inquisitor.’

‘Gamma, give me a deep augur scan, if you would.’

Gamma’s industrial claws reached down and ripped out a dusty chair so he could get close to the augury. His supplemental limbs jabbed at buttons and levers, his mechadendrites plugged into multiple input jacks, so that he was working three stations simultaneously.

‘The ship is that of Cawl’s principal lackey, Qvo-87,’ Gamma said. ‘He styles himself a magos, but he is nothing of the kind.’

‘Meaning?’ said Cehen-qui.

‘Cawl has many blasphemous creations in his service. Things that think and act like men, but are not. He has only avoided censure because his followers are so many, and Cawl is cunning, always sure to make his things so they almost adhere to the principles of the lore. Qvo-87 is a clone, in a way. As such, it could be argued that he falls within the lore laid out in the Warnings. But there are others that say he is not a clone, not even within a very wide margin of error.’

‘You are one of those.’

‘I am. They call Cawl the Prime Conduit of the Ommissiah. I call him blasphemer.’

‘That’s all fascinating, Gamma,’ said Cehen-qui dismissively. He stretched out his back. It cracked. ‘Do they have their weapons powered?’

‘Not yet. All weapons are retracted and inactive, all defensive and offensive subsystems unengaged, but they could be hiding their intentions.’

‘Are they?’

‘They have allowed a full augur sweep. No interference on the macro or micro levels.’ Gamma sounded disappointed.

‘In that case, we shall keep this cordial, for the time being. Be alert to any attempt to infiltrate the base while we are communicating.’

‘I am receiving another hail from the ship, lord inquisitor.’

‘They can wait a little longer,’ said Cehen-qui. ‘They will not consider leaving empty-handed. If Cawl is true to his reputation he will take the aeldari witch. Xenic guard to battle stations. Prime defensive weapons batteries. Activate internal defences.’

Cehen-qui pointed at the comms station. ‘Prepare to open channels in three minutes. Let them see the weaponry of this station awake, then we shall find out how brave they are.’

‘Only a fraction of it is operable,’ warned Valeneez.

‘It will be enough,’ said Cehen-qui.

Primus paced the short distance between the *0-101-0*’s principal hololith pit and Qvo’s command cradle.

‘They are stalling for time.’

‘They are,’ said Qvo, busy with some esoteric task.

‘They are not answering our requests for contact,’ said Primus.

‘They are not.’ Qvo moved from one bank of instruments to another.

‘They will be powering their weaponry,’ said Primus.

‘They are powering their weaponry,’ said Qvo distractedly.

‘Then what are we waiting for?’ said Primus.

‘Really, Primus,’ said Qvo. ‘You may prefer frontal assault, but sometimes it pays to be cunning.’ He blurted a jarring stream of binaric at one of his followers. The priest, a box with a fringe of flailing metal extrusions, responded in kind. ‘Of course they are stalling for time. Of course they are making a show of strength. We shall show ourselves to be unconcerned. Meanwhile, I am making use of the time to infiltrate their cogitator systems with subversion code script that will make your task a great deal easier.’ Qvo’s voice rose in exasperation. ‘So if you please, allow me to concentrate. Thank you.’

‘I should be going,’ said Primus.

‘Yes.’ Qvo peered at a screen. He frowned. ‘That’s looking about right.’ He pushed a plunger down with his humanoid hand while a dozen other stick-thin metal limbs jabbed at the keys of an input device. ‘Very good. You can go. They will not see you. I have made sure of that.’

‘I have been alive for millennia,’ said Primus. ‘I am tormented by such boredom and despair, I sometimes cannot think, but I do not wish to end my time by being obliterated in the void because of one of your mistakes.’

‘There shall be none,’ said Qvo.

‘Good,’ said Primus. ‘Because if there is, I shall find a way to exact revenge upon you.’

The big Space Marine struggled around the data-posts and draping cables of the command sphere, and exited.

Qvo rolled his eyes and continued with his work.

‘Magos Qvo.’ Adept-Dialogus Kurubik addressed his lord from his bronze speaking trumpet. ‘The Inquisitorial facility has indicated that they are ready to begin communications.’

‘Aha!’ said Qvo. ‘Excellent. Let’s have him then, this inquisitor who likes to keep the servant of the Prime Conduit waiting.’

The hololith blinked. A figure appeared in full over the pit. The hololith was presented solely in shades of orange, but Qvo’s internal mechanisms provided life-true colours to the projection. The inquisitor wore a startling white jacket and gloves, blue trousers piped with grey, high boots, a lot of brocade and many metal badges. His hair was meticulously arranged. He was handsome, with a single scar on his cheek that Qvo suspected had been deliberately left in place

for effect.

‘Greetings!’ Qvo said loudly. ‘I am Qvo-87, servant and confidant of the Archmagos Dominus Belisarius Cawl, Prime Conduit of the Omnissiah and foremost practitioner of the Machine-God’s mysteries. I believe you have something that my lord desires.’

The inquisitor gave no name. ‘He shall not have it. The prisoner you desire is in the custody of the Ordo Xenos.’

‘Then we find ourselves at odds,’ said Qvo.

Primus passed across the gap between the *0-101-0* and the dungeon. His armour spirit broadcast anti-augur obfuscation noise. He had his reactor and systems down at the lowest possible settings. Qvo’s infiltration codes kept the station’s augurs from picking up this fleck of man-shaped metal, so Primus was to all intents invisible to machine senses, and so small and insignificant against the great emptiness of the void it was unlikely any human eye would see him either.

With Primus’ radiation vents shut to keep his thermal profile low, there was nowhere for his reactor’s energy to go but inward. An internal thermometer rose steadily in his retinal display. His altered physiology had a broader thermal tolerance than a standard human’s, but he was not immune. A chronograph ticked down above the gauge. Fifteen minutes, eleven seconds until internal temperature became dangerous. He was already perspiring profusely. Sweat stung his eyes and pooled around the soft seal collar of his undersuit.

He couldn’t let that distract him. The psyker on board the ship was looking for him. He felt its attention sweep across the stars like a searchlight. He must maintain a perfect psychic cloak at all times, for even when the psyker’s inner eye was looking elsewhere, his unshielded soul would burn bright, drawing them inevitably to him.

The psyker was looking everywhere for him. The inquisition were not stupid. They suspected infiltration.

‘But so it must play out,’ Primus said to himself.

The station loomed ahead. Primus had shoved himself off with his feet. His aim had to be perfect. He could not risk a burst from his stabiliser jets to correct his course. If that became necessary, he would have to choose between discovery or overshooting the station completely.

He was near enough now to see automated guns tracking back and forth. Their single red targeting eyes passed over him, not seeing him. He breathed shallowly nonetheless, although the idea of them hearing him was ludicrous.

He had no idea why he was so tense. Qvo was irritating him more than usual. Being with Qvo was not overly different to being with the magos himself. There seemed to be no escape from Cawl.

He lost sight of the shape of the station. It became a huge metal cliff adorned with blindfolded angels and windowless arches. The speed of his approach appeared to increase the closer he got, now he had a reference point for his progress. He lifted his feet and activated his mag locks. His feet hit the hull hard. He was thrown forward, and had to swing back his arms violently to counteract his momentum.

Primus checked his equipment was still attached to his belt, then stepped around.

The hull there was two hundred feet tall. Dozens of decks were contained inside. He had a long search ahead of him. He called up the station's cartolith. The nearest airlock was thirty yards above.

Feet locking jerkily to the plasteel hull, Primus made his way upwards.

'You must give up the prisoner,' said Qvo, for the sixteenth time. He had tried every modulation of the human voice he could. None had worked. Nor had logic, or emotive pleas. Inquisitor Cehen-qui remained immovable.

'The prisoner is a high-ranking xenos of a power in active opposition to the Imperium of Man,' said Cehen-qui. 'It falls within the purview of our ordo to interrogate him and decide upon the correct usage of any information that might be yielded from that interrogation. You cannot have the alien, not under any circumstances.'

'I will not leave until you have given it up,' said Qvo.

'If you do not, we will be forced to regard your trespass in our orbit as an aggressive act. We will open fire upon your ship.'

'That would constitute a direct act of war against the Adeptus Mechanicus,' countered Qvo. 'There will be severe repercussions.'

'If anyone ever gets to hear about it,' said Cehen-qui. 'And you will be dead whether they do or not.'

'I wouldn't be so sure about either of those things,' said Qvo. 'I am the servant of the Prime Conduit of the Omn—'

'By the Emperor, the lord of all the galaxy, you are a tedious creature,' said Cehen-qui.

'Perhaps we should resolve this face-to-face?' said Qvo. 'It may go more quickly. If I could but present the lord primarch's documents to you so you may

see their authenticity...’

‘You must think I was born outside the Emperor’s Light if you think I’ll fall for that trick. Of course I will not agree to meeting you. Either on your ship or on mine. You are going to leave, immediately. You have two minutes to power your drives and move off, or we will open fire.’

The hololith blinked out.

Qvo sighed. ‘Tricky, tricky, tricky.’

‘You can’t have thought it would be easy, magos,’ said Loseol-Azeriph, the *0-101-0*’s arch-belligerous.

‘No, no, I didn’t,’ said Qvo. ‘It would be quite dull if it were.’

‘Then your orders?’

‘Bring the shields up. Ignite our main drive, take us out from the station. We’ll make them think we’re on our way.’

‘Then we can open fire?’ said Loseol-Azeriph with relish.

‘Then we can open fire. Power our weapons as soon as the void shields are active. Secure targeting locks on all their active weapons batteries. Come about, and attack.’

Primus crept as well as an eight foot tall warrior in power armour could through the station. His suit was of the Intercessor type, tooled for direct confrontation rather than stealth, yet he moved quietly enough. The sigh of his motors and muffled tread did little to penetrate the dungeon’s sepulchral silence. It was a quiet that went beyond the material realm. A heavy weight of suffering smothered all sensation. The pain and sorrow of the creatures once incarcerated there steeped the fabric of the place. Primus passed along many corridors, each one lined with dozens of cells. He peered into a few through the viewing slots. A significant proportion contained age-yellowed bones. The variety of beings was astonishing. But though the creatures were different, their lingering imprints were the same; each and every cell shared the same psychic taint of despair. These last occupants had been left to their fate when the dungeon was abandoned. Primus was so old his emotions were worn away to stubs, but the atmosphere of the place got to him even so.

The tremor of a weapons strike on shields made him pause. Qvo had begun his attack. Further strikes followed. He was going to have to be quick.

He dropped his psychic mask a moment to let out his mind, searching for the greatest concentration of souls. He found two, one up in the hub, the other not far distant. At the second he felt the strange psyker’s presence, and it felt him.

Throwing off stealth, Primus hurried towards his target.

Loseol-Azeriph's mechadendrites clicked in and out of interface sockets all over his vast, cathedral-organ operations station. Lines of data text were reflected in each of his six eyes.

'I regret to inform you, Magos Qvo, that although their void shields have collapsed, the Ordo Xenos dungeon will withstand our weapons for several days.'

The *0-101-0* trembled under return fire. Void discharge lit up the command sphere in violent purples and greens.

'Now now, we don't want to blow it up,' said Qvo. 'You're too eager for destruction.'

'Forgive me, my lord,' said Loseol-Azeriph. 'One loses oneself in one's specialisation.'

'Praise the Machine-God that it is so,' said Qvo. 'Current status of enemy weapons, if you please, Loseol.'

'Eighty per cent reduction in destructive capability. Their guns outnumber ours, but they are very much outmatched by our targeting speed and prioritisation protocols. I have taken the liberty of removing their voidward weaponry first. They are toothless.'

'You are enjoying yourself.'

'I shall answer affirmatively to that,' said Loseol-Azeriph gladly.

'Then might we approach?' asked Qvo.

'In complete safety.'

'Engage main engines, quarter speed. Bring us back towards the dungeon, and prepare to launch boarding craft.'

<Polite interrogative (request insolence amelioration): Why?> canted the box of wires and nerves in fluid Qvo called Sixer.

'I concur with the magos-transmechanic. Quarter speed is insufficient for a ramming run,' said Loseol-Azeriph. 'The tonnage of the station is in excess of ours by a factor of three hundred. We shall die, broken against their higher mass.'

'We're not going to ram it, Loseol,' said Qvo with a gleeful grin. 'We're just going to give it a little *push*. The dungeon is falling into the world it orbits anyway. Let's help it along. That will keep their eyes off the ball, as I believe people used to say a very long time ago.'

The station was under heavy attack, and so Primus approached his target openly.

Light bursts from hotshot lasguns blasted at him down the narrow approach way. Their overpowered beams punched smoking craters into his grey ceramite, but failed to penetrate. He replied with his bolter, cutting down three men in a single burst. He walked into the crossroads they were covering, and came into view of a tripod-mounted heavy bolter sheltered behind a barricade of rusted boxes to his right. His battleplate and his psychic senses warned him before it opened up, and he stepped back as a swarm of large-calibre bolts screamed down the corridor.

He would save his psychic strength. Mundane methods of death were called for. He pulled out a frag grenade from his bandolier, flicked out the pin and tossed it around the corner, angling it perfectly so that it bounced from the wall and came down behind the barricade. As soon as it exploded, he strode forward. Shouts came from his left. Half a dozen men in heavy carapace were coming at him. Bolts from his gun drove them into cover. The magazine ran dry and he ejected it one-handed, raising the other hand to call upon the warp.

A barrier of purple fire roared across the corridor. The foremost troopers were caught and screamed as the uncanny flames ate into their bodies. The rest were driven back.

The station shook to a direct hit. Then another, then several more. Primus recognised the shock patterns of Mechanicus assault boats boring through the hull.

Qvo had sent in his tech-thralls.

Primus pressed on.

‘I can’t believe they’re doing this! Bring the damn thing down!’ shouted Cehen-qui apoplectically.

‘The men are trying, my lord inquisitor,’ said Valeneez calmly. ‘We cannot penetrate their shields. The full weapons grid of the station is non-functional due to neglect. What might we had, we have now lost.’

‘My lord, we have reports of hostile forces upon multiple decks,’ said one of Cehen-qui’s technicians.

‘How many are close to the prisoner?’ asked Cehen-qui.

‘Some fifty or more, my lord. More assault boats are coming. The main vessel is not slowing.’

‘Then shoot it! Shoot them all.’

‘By the Emperor, they’re going to ram us!’ shouted Valeneez.

A heavy impact rocked the station, sending Cehen-qui staggering. He stared with disbelieving fury at the Adeptus Mechanicus ship. The vessel’s flat prow

nosed against the hub, the tail swinging from side to side as it adjusted its position to stop itself from slipping free. The hub vibrated as the ship pushed against it. Metal creaked as, slowly, the station began to move towards its host planet.

The vessel sparkled under a constant rain of fire from the station, but none of the weapons were powerful enough to break the void shields.

‘Oh, my lord!’ Callow squeaked.

‘How long do we have?’ asked Cehen-qui.

‘Time to planetary impact is deceptively short,’ said Gamma. ‘Once Otranti has us in its grasp, we shall accelerate rapidly. I calculate not longer than three hours.’

‘What about our ship?’

‘Undamaged,’ reported one of his men.

‘They are giving us a way out,’ said Valeneez. ‘Clever.’

‘Will you stop praising them!’ Cehen-qui swore. ‘Prepare to evacuate. Get the prisoner ready. They’ll never chase down an Inquisitorial cutter.’

Primus came within a hundred yards of a raging battle waged between demi-men and Inquisitorial shock troops. He passed them by, his powerful mind clouding their perceptions. The sounds of shouts and the crack of las-beams receded, and he reached a T-junction. To his left, towards the hub of the station, was the greatest concentration of troops. They clustered around their sleeping prisoner, waiting for their enemy, their minds filled with fear and thoughts of duty.

Primus brought up a cartolith. A red dot pulsed half a mile away in the opposite direction. Quietly, he stepped into the corridor, and turned right.

Cehen-qui blasted a cyborg warrior at point-blank range. There was so little human left it was practically a servitor. Whoever this Qvo-87 was, he had no skitarii troops to call on, only the dregs of the Adeptus Mechanicus military. The machine-man died in a spray of oil and brain matter. The storm troopers pushed on ahead, shooting more of the clumsy foe with characteristic efficiency. Gamma marched with them, remorselessly gunning down the servants of his own cult.

Cehen-qui reached the cell of the prisoner. The fighting moved away, and he whistled impatiently up the corridor.

‘You can come out now!’ he shouted.

Valeneez emerged from a side door. Callow cowered in his shadow.

Cehen-qui holstered his bolt pistol and looked at the door to the cell. Active psychic wards gleamed on the metal. ‘Open it.’

Valeneez came down the corridor, taking out a bunch of data wands as he came. He employed the keys in a strict sequence to deactivate the door's defensive measures, and it opened with a warning fanfare. Chilled nitrogen billowed out, clearing to reveal a small room with a clear methanol suspension tube at its centre. Within was the spindly form of a naked male aeldari. His hands and feet were bound in all-encompassing manacles. His was head locked into a psychic cradle.

'Amateurs,' growled Cehen-qui. 'The Adeptus Mechanicus do not have the wit for this kind of work.' He spoke into a vox-bead mounted on his collar. 'Get the prisoner onto the ship.'

Men and servitors moved up, and began locking chains to the tube's transit points.

He looked around. 'Where by the Throne is ShoShonai?'

The further Primus got from the hub, the more dilapidated the dungeon became. Holes in the metal were crudely patched. Readings from his cogitator warned of chambers open to the void behind closed doors. The gravity plating was inconstant in effect, and many lumens were out.

Finally, he reached his destination. A locked door closed so long ago it had rusted shut.

Primus rested his hand on the door and closed his eyes. He attempted to scry the room, but his clairvoyance showed him only blankness. Absence in this case was evidence of presence.

His eyes snapped open. The psyker was close by. Perhaps even in the room. He extended his senses. The blank spot extended in all directions.

Battle was coming. He checked his bolt pistol and loosened his chainsword before dealing with the door. Other psykers preferred force weapons, but Primus did not care for them. He was physically strong enough to put the chainsword through a bulkhead, if need be.

He checked the devices in pouches on his belt: a platinum signum projector, and three locking blackstone rings.

He placed a melta bomb on the door, twisted the activation handle, and stepped back.

Metal flashed with white heat as the fusion reaction bit. The melta bomb evaporated with a roar, taking the door and part of the wall with it.

Primus drew his sword, and stepped over cooling slag.

A stasis coffin was clamped to the far wall, fed by a series of conduits that

glowed with green energies. They, like the coffin, were not of human origin.

Primus looked around. He saw nothing, not with his second sight nor with his auto-senses. The psyker was not in the room.

He moved towards his target. Through a window of clear mineral, he saw the occupant of the coffin uplit by more of the soft green energy – a metal skull for a face on a body as tall as Primus. It had a lidless, cyclopean eye of glassy stone. Its head was crowned with a crest of precious metals.

‘You were right, Cawl,’ said Primus. ‘It’s here.’

Primus opened the coffin with the wand. Ancient locks lifted. Cylinders of alien steels spun from the side, and the coffin lid rose up.

A necron lay in funereal splendour within. Primus tossed out priceless grave goods, locked the blackstone rings about his neck and wrists, and clamped a teleport locator to the spidery design on its chest.

He sent a coded datapulse.

‘I have it, Qvo,’ he said. ‘Let’s go.’

Cehen-qui slaughtered his way to the dock. Qvo’s troops did what they could to block the way to the *Ruptor Xenorum*, but they were no match for him. He and his party gained the quayside, bloody and exhausted, but mostly alive.

His master of cargoes was waiting. A small tractor dragged the prisoner on a grav-sled onto the ship through a loading umbilical. Cehen-qui strode aboard.

He waited a few minutes for his remaining servants to retreat to the ship, but the station’s internal augurs showed a large force of Qvo’s cyborg troops making for the berth, and he decided to leave the rest of his men to their fate.

‘Cast off,’ he said. ‘Ignite engines. Forty-five degrees down, full speed. We’ll go under the dungeon and be away.’

The psyker decided to show itself. Primus turned. A woman stood in the doorway, emanating a dangerous power.

‘That is not yours to take,’ she said. Her voice was doubled, two speaking as one.

Primus gunned his sword. Witch-fire burst into life around his head.

‘Then you’ll have to stop me taking it,’ he said.

Pale warp light lit the room. The woman raised a hand. Primus flew against the wall with a booming clang. She held him there. With a twitch of her head, she slammed his hand against the wall until his chainsword clattered to the ground.

Her triumphant grin faltered. She blinked, confused.

‘I... I don’t want to hurt you,’ she said.

Primus snarled. A sphere of energy burst from his heart, blasting away her psychic bonds.

‘Then don’t,’ he said. He threw aside his bolt pistol, and punched out. A ball of telekinetic force hit her in the chest, throwing her out of the room into the corridor. He pulled, and she hurtled into the room towards him. He lifted his hands and she rose up, her arms and legs stretching behind her.

‘Please,’ she said. ‘Stop. I have blocked it, for now. Please listen.’ Her robes writhed. Primus narrowed his eyes. He felt two souls, not one.

He pinched his fingers and ripped away the psyker’s outer garment. Underneath, the woman wore a tight-fitting bodysuit with no seams. She was emaciated. The flesh clung tightly to the bones of her skull, making her eyes appear shockingly huge.

Another organism was clasped about her head. Squid-like in appearance, its soft body draped down her back, tentacles wrapped about her throat and gripping her face. Their hooks were embedded so deep that the woman’s skin had grown over them. Eyes of marbled yellow with cruciform pupils stared at Primus from either side of the woman’s face.

He faltered at the sight of this abomination.

‘He put it on me,’ she said. ‘It enslaved me.’ The doubled nature of her voice wavered. ‘Please, help me. When I sensed you, I knew you were strong enough to break it. Kill it. Kill me. I am impure.’

He sensed the woman fighting the creature. She was a psyker, but so was it. Its xenos mind mingled with hers. He had never seen anything like it before.

‘Quickly! I can’t hold it back any longer!’ The twinned nature of her voice came back with redoubled strength. Primus pushed his own powers harder, keeping it restrained. He strode towards the woman, and gripped the boneless parasite in his right hand.

A rush of images bled from its soul. Its world devastated, its kind driven to the edge of extinction, the last of them exploited and enslaved. The focus of its hatred wore many faces, but all were human.

His grip loosened.

‘Please,’ said the xenos. ‘Kill me.’

‘You are the xenos, you are talking to me,’ he said. He looked into the woman’s eyes. She stared at him angrily, but she could not speak.

‘Yes. I, not it,’ the xenos said. ‘Kill me. Free me from this rigid creature. End my suffering.’

Primus obliged. His hand clenched. The creature was leathery and tough, but he

was strong. It gave a thin bubbling scream as its organs were pulped. Primus ripped it free, the hooked tentacles flaying the woman's skin from her face.

He stamped the last of the life from the alien and released his telekinetic hold on the host.

The woman fell down.

She lifted her ruined head. 'Why did you do that? Why are you fighting against us? We are both servants of the Emperor.'

Primus went to retrieve his bolt pistol, batting away her feeble psychic assault as he picked it up from the corner.

The gun felt good in his hand.

'Those words ceased to mean anything to me centuries ago,' he said.

He obliterated her head and torso with three shots.

'Qvo, Qvo, this is Alpha Primus. I have our target. Bring me back.'

Corposant wisped up from the ground. Lightning crackled from his armour and the skin of the necron. The familiar, horrible sensation of imminent teleportation crawled through his bones.

Primus closed his eyes.

With a thunderclap of air rushing to fill a void, Primus and the necron were gone.

The *Ruptor Xenorum* sped around the curve of Otranti, leaving the slower Mechanicus ship far behind.

Cehen-qui watched it vanish in the hololith and smiled triumphantly.

'So fail all who would oppose the Emperor's Inquisition,' he said.

'Wait.' Gamma stepped forward, his human arms folded, his mechanical claws twitching and snapping as he thought. 'Scan for etheric disturbance.'

A moment passed.

'There's an echo – single or double teleport from the outer reaches of the dungeon,' reported an ensign.

'What was kept there?' asked Gamma.

'Unknown. Records missing,' another crewman said.

Cehen-qui leaned forward in his chair. 'Why are you asking?'

'Do you not think that was a little easy?' said Gamma.

'Are you suggesting they let us go?'

'Have you considered, my lord,' said Gamma, 'that the false priest Qvo might not have been there for our farseer after all?'

Cehen-qui's face hardened.

‘Bring us about. Lock on to that ship. Begin pursuit.’

Nervous faces peered into blank scopes.

‘My lord,’ said the man at the prime augury. ‘The Mechanicus ship has vanished.’

Cehen-qui slammed his fist hard into the armrest of his throne.

‘Maybe not so amateurish after all,’ said Valeneez drily.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Guy Haley is the author of the Horus Heresy novels *Titandearth*, *Wolfsbane* and *Pharos*, the Primarchs novels *Corax: Lord of Shadows*, *Perturabo: The Hammer of Olympia*, and the Warhammer 40,000 novels *Dark Imperium*, *Dark Imperium: Plague War*, *The Devastation of Baal*, *Dante*, *Baneblade*, *Shadowsword*, *Valedor* and *Death of Integrity*. He has also written *Throneworld* and *The Beheading* for The Beast Arises series. His enthusiasm for all things greenskin has also led him to pen the eponymous Warhammer novel *Skarsnik*, as well as the End Times novel *The Rise of the Horned Rat*. He has also written stories set in the Age of Sigmar, included in *War Storm*, *Ghal Maraz* and *Call of Archaon*. He lives in Yorkshire with his wife and son.

An extract from *Servants of the Machine-God*.



Making children cry was a sacred duty to Raym Bartaum. He regarded the scale of their tearful sobs and the volume of their snot as a measure of how well he was doing his job. The sound of a nine-year-old in tears as he struggled to reload an autogun with frostbitten fingers was music to his ears.

It was the sound of them learning not to make the mistake that had seen them brought before him ever again.

‘Give me the child, and I will mould the man,’ had been his favourite riposte when do-gooding nobles evinced squeamishness at his methods.

Leave the inspirational crap to Kaytein. Raym had become a drill abbot to scare a thousand tonnes of hell out of each and every *progena* that came through Scholam Vikara.

And scaring them was easy.

The Imperium was a frightening place, after all.

Frightening for trained Guardsmen, let alone young children sent to a grim, granite-faced scholam with their parents freshly dead or so far away they might as well be.

And once he’d shown them just how bad everything else in the galaxy was, he taught them to be even worse. He taught them to be stronger than the things that wanted them dead. He taught them how to fight.

Yes, scaring *progena* was easy, but nothing he’d ever shown or told them of bloodthirsty xenofoms, traitors or warp-spawned monsters had scared them quite as much as the sight of his terror was doing right now.

Raym Bartaum was terrified because he knew what was coming.

He had a cybernetic arm and adamantium plates replacing half his pitted skull to remind him just how bad things were going to get.

The scholam yard was the size of a good-sized regimental assembly ground, which, come rain, sun or snow it was, six days out of seven. A mix of heavy

supply trucks, groundcars and a couple of stripped-down Chimeras used for training gunned their engines by the opened Proximus Gate. Slow, lumbering things, none had speed enough to outpace the approaching enemy.

Thudding explosions sounded from beyond the scholam walls, bouncing echoes making it impossible to tell from where in the city the sound originated. Raym heard the rattle of small-arms fire, the heavier thud of artillery and the unmistakable sound of dying soldiers.

Twelve years had passed since Raym had set foot on a real battlefield, fifteen since he'd heard the screeching howls of this particular foe.

But there were some sounds you never forgot; some sounds that could still bring a decorated veteran out in cold sweat and make him want to eat the barrel of his bolt pistol.

Children were spilling from the cloisters of the scholam, barely dressed and fumbling with their rifle slings. The youngest was barely six, the oldest approaching his maturity.

And every single one of them was going to die here.

They flinched at the crash of artillery fire from deeper in the city and stared in horror at the distant smudges of black smoke rising in the distance.

Raym's fellow drill abbots herded their charges towards the waiting vehicles. Military-grade voices shouted at the youngsters: parade-ground trained, audible even over the scholam's bells and the ululating sirens blaring from the city walls of Vikara.

The progena were chased by profanity Raym had last heard in a Catachan brothel and switches to beat the backs of those moving too slowly. His own class were already following at his heels. Just like the first day they had come to him, most were blubbing in fear. Others were too terrified to even cry.

They were a good bunch now; the softest clay beaten and then built into what he'd hoped would be the finest warriors, statesmen, generals or inquisitors of the Imperium. They'd hated him at first; oh, how they'd hated him.

Two of them had even tried to kill him.

But they'd learned to respect him. And as they grew and saw who they had become, they understood just what he'd made of them and were grateful.

Raym looked up as a squadron of aircraft roared overhead. Too fast to see what kind. Lightnings most likely. Dogfighters, which meant the enemy was almost here.

'Hurry it up, damn you!' he shouted, hoping his angry tone would mask his fear. He hauled down the tailgate of the first truck. Something exploded beyond

the walls of the scholam. A greenish fireball painted the sky.

Children scrambled aboard, the older ones helping the youngest. Raym was gratified to see the disciplined control in their faces. Fear as well, but no panic.

‘Are they coming to rescue us?’ asked Morlay, a promising young lad with pinched cheeks and the potential to be a quality leader of men.

‘Rescue us?’ snapped Raym, turning his fear into an authoritative bark. ‘Don’t be soft, lad. Why would Lord Ohden send troops to save our sorry arses when he’s a war to fight? Every Guardsman with a gun will be heading to the walls.’

‘No one’s coming?’ said a sandy-haired girl named Lorza.

Tough and uncompromising, if she hadn’t made the cut for interrogator training, Raym would have been outraged. Right now she looked like a frightened ten-year-old.

‘Why would they? We’re no priority at all. Just a bunch of half-trained orphans and cripples. We’re hungry mouths, dead weight,’ said Raym, raising his voice so others could hear. ‘So if they won’t come for us, we’re going to have to do this ourselves, right? We’re going to have to uphold the grand traditions of Scholam Vikara at the end of a lasgun and on the edge of a combat blade.’

Some of the younger ones cheered, but the older ones saw through his bravado.

The last of the progena were aboard, and Raym slammed the tailgate shut. He dropped the locking bolt into place and slapped his hand on the vehicle’s side.

‘All aboard!’

The far wall of the scholam buckled as something enormous slammed into it. Heavy blocks tumbled to the parade ground and cracks split the masonry from the foundations upwards.

‘Go!’ he shouted, and the truck belched a filthy cloud of engine smoke. Its tyres spun on gravel as Raym heard the frenzied scrape of hundreds of razor-sharp talons on stone.

They came over the wall in a chittering, screeching tide of hissing killers. Blade-limbed and sheathed in chitinous plates of glistening organic armour. Bulbous heads that were all questing tongues, needle-toothed jaws and dead, black eyes.

Hormagaunts, remembered Raym. That’s what we called them.

He heard barked orders, but they were dulled and slow, like something from a nightmare. Gunfire flayed the ruined wall, bursting scores of the creatures like pus-filled blisters.

It wouldn’t be enough: they were coming over in their hundreds, maybe even thousands. Then the wall buckled and collapsed as something even worse came

through.

Raym had no name for it. A hulking colossus with a segmented carapace, bent low where its ram-like skull had demolished the wall. Taller than five strong men, its thorax limbs were fused horrors of drooling bio-weaponry. Caustic slime slathered its elephantine legs as it bludgeoned a way inside. Its chest spasmed with intercostal muscle contraction and hundreds of chitinous barbs spat like bullets from between its ribs. Three trucks were shredded like they'd been hosed with assault cannon fire.

Young bodies fell to the parade ground, ripped up and screaming. A Chimera exploded as a gout of corrosive bio-acid punched through its armour. A few pitiful figures tumbled from the wreckage, the flesh sloughing from their bones.

Packs of swarming alien creatures raced across the parade ground, leaping and bounding, trampling one another as their overriding biological imperative to tear and kill made them mad with a devouring, all-consuming hunger.

The colossus finally tore through the ruined wall. A pair of hooked blade limbs at least six feet long unsheathed from creamy folds of flesh at its shoulders. With its blunt, bladed snout still lowered, the behemoth charged in the midst of the pack beasts.

Raym drew his bolt pistol. He wasn't a drill abbot now, he was a soldier of the Imperial Guard.

'For Vikara!' he shouted and fired his bolt pistol empty.

Ten shots, each one a kill. Not enough to make even the slightest difference, but when had that ever mattered to one of the Emperor's finest?

And then the front line of the swarm vanished in a deafening blizzard of explosions. Sawing blasts of fire cut through the packs of shrieking monsters as they died by the score. Raym ducked back at the overwhelming noise, feeling the percussive thunder of high-calibre shells passing so close.

He crouched as something huge loomed over him, towering and monstrous, a giant of adamantium and fury. With a booming cannon and a roaring chainblade for arms, it was clad in armour the colour of a winter's sky. Blue and cold, chevroned with streaks of black and amber. A bright gonfalon streamed from its left shoulder. A rearing horse with a fluted horn at its forehead.

The giant planted its splay-clawed feet, bellowing defiance as its enormous cannon poured a relentless torrent of shells into the screaming swarm. Carapace-mounted assault weaponry sawed through the horde, cutting down what little the rapid-firing explosive ordnance left alive.

The charging colossus bellowed and bared a vast, fang-filled mouth,

recognising an opponent worthy of its attention.

The armoured giant loosed an answering blast of a skirling horn and brought its long chainblade to bear. Hot vapours bled from the roaring friction of its tearing teeth. The monster spat green fire, but the giant shrugged it off with an unseen energy shield.

They came together in a crashing thunder that shook the parade ground with its fury. The giant swung its enormous blade and the beast crashed to its knees as most of its torso simply ceased to exist.

A noxious cloud of atomised alien flesh sprayed from the embedded blade's teeth as the beast fell forward. Its limbs thrashed, still trying to raise its gutted carcass, still driven to kill by its monstrous overmind.

It bellowed in pain and hideous appetite.

The armoured giant crushed its vast skull with a final thunderous stomp. Its stubber cannons raked the ruined wall as more of the alien packs gathered for an assault. The giant's horn skirled a blast that Raym recognised, the order to retreat under cover.

Raym took a moment to salute the giant before climbing onto the back of his truck as it pulled away. The Proximus Gate passed overhead as the driver gunned the engine. He lost sight of the giant as they turned a corner. The white of its horned-horse banner was spattered with alien blood.

Raym dropped over the tailgate and leaned against it.

'What in the name of Ohden's balls was that?' said Lorza, breathless with fear and wonder.

'I've never seen anything like it,' said Morlay.

Raym took a moment to catch his breath.

'That, my lad,' said Raym, 'was a Knight.'

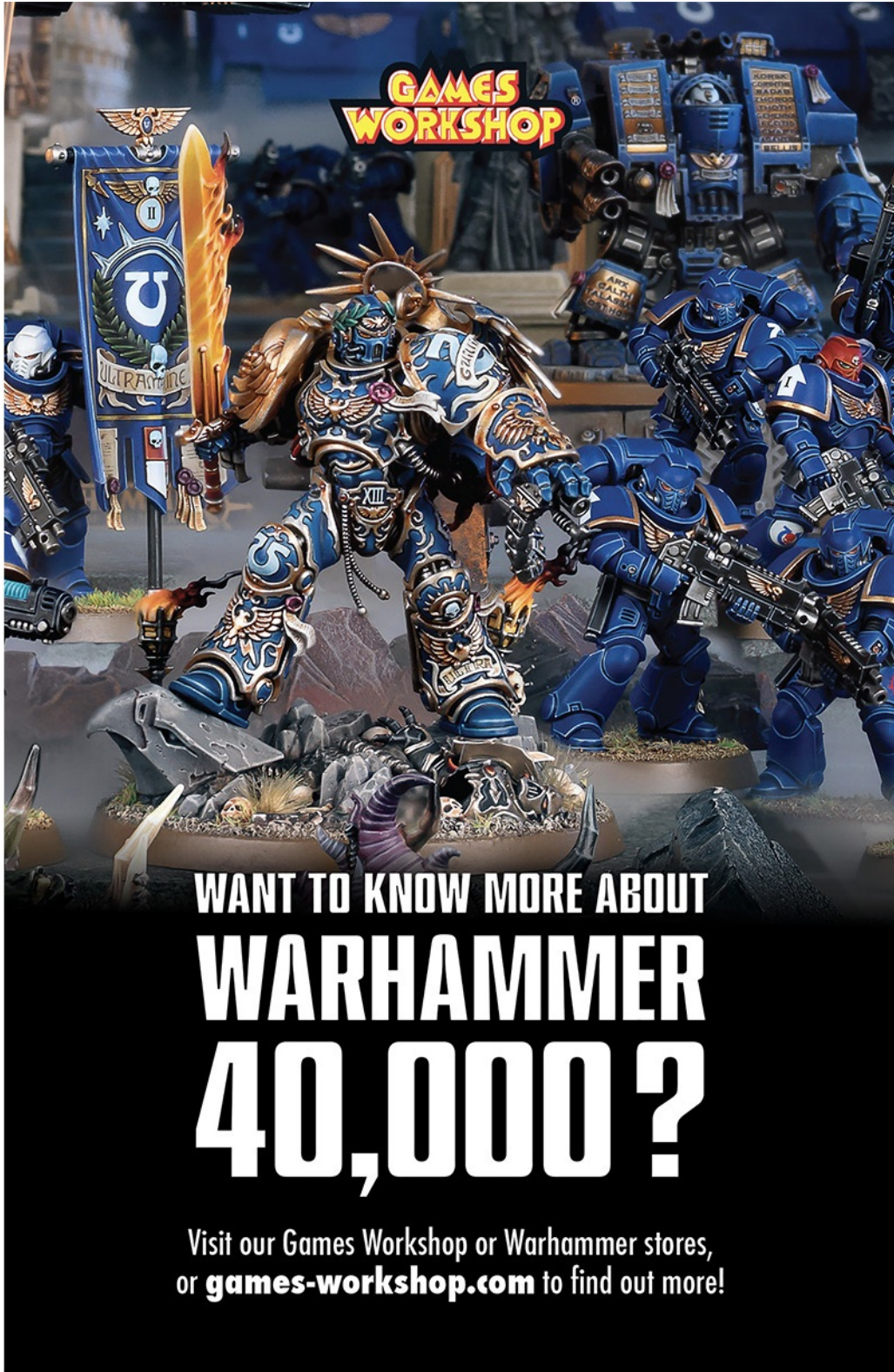
Click here to buy *Servants of the Machine-God*.

THE BLACK LIBRARY NEWSLETTER



**Sign up today for updates on the
latest Black Library news and releases**

SIGN UP NOW



WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT
WARHAMMER
40,000?

Visit our Games Workshop or Warhammer stores,
or games-workshop.com to find out more!

A BLACK LIBRARY PUBLICATION

This eBook edition published in 2019 by Black Library, Games Workshop Ltd, Willow Road, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, UK.

Produced by Games Workshop in Nottingham.

To Speak as One © Copyright Games Workshop Limited 2019. To Speak as One, GW, Games Workshop, Black Library, The Horus Heresy, The Horus Heresy Eye logo, Space Marine, 40K, Warhammer, Warhammer 40,000, the 'Aquila' Double-headed Eagle logo, and all associated logos, illustrations, images, names, creatures, races, vehicles, locations, weapons, characters, and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are either ® or TM, and/or © Games Workshop Limited, variably registered around the world.

All Rights Reserved.

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978-1-78999-737-8

This is a work of fiction. All the characters and events portrayed in this book are fictional, and any resemblance to real people or incidents is purely coincidental.

See Black Library on the internet at
blacklibrary.com

Find out more about Games Workshop's world of Warhammer and the Warhammer 40,000 universe at
games-workshop.com

eBook license

This license is made between:

Games Workshop Limited t/a Black Library, Willow Road, Lenton, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, United Kingdom (“Black Library”); and

(2) the purchaser of an e-book product from Black Library website (“You/you/Your/your”)

(jointly, “the parties”)

These are the terms and conditions that apply when you purchase an e-book (“e-book”) from Black Library. The parties agree that in consideration of the fee paid by you, Black Library grants you a license to use the e-book on the following terms:

* 1. Black Library grants to you a personal, non-exclusive, non-transferable, royalty-free license to use the e-book in the following ways:

o 1.1 to store the e-book on any number of electronic devices and/or storage media (including, by way of example only, personal computers, e-book readers, mobile phones, portable hard drives, USB flash drives, CDs or DVDs) which are personally owned by you;

o 1.2 to access the e-book using an appropriate electronic device and/or through any appropriate storage media; and

* 2. For the avoidance of doubt, you are ONLY licensed to use the e-book as described in paragraph 1 above. You may NOT use or store the e-book in any other way. If you do, Black Library shall be entitled to terminate this license.

* 3. Further to the general restriction at paragraph 2, Black Library shall be entitled to terminate this license in the event that you use or store the e-book (or any part of it) in any way not expressly licensed. This includes (but is by no means limited to) the following circumstances:

o 3.1 you provide the e-book to any company, individual or other legal person who does not possess a license to use or store it;

o 3.2 you make the e-book available on bit-torrent sites, or are otherwise complicit in ‘seeding’ or sharing the e-book with any company, individual or other legal person who does not possess a license to use or store it;

o 3.3 you print and distribute hard copies of the e-book to any company, individual or other legal person who does not possess a license to use or store it;

o 3.4 you attempt to reverse engineer, bypass, alter, amend, remove or otherwise make any change to any copy protection technology which may be applied to the e-book.

* 4. By purchasing an e-book, you agree for the purposes of the Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations 2000 that Black Library may commence the service (of provision of the e-book to you) prior to your ordinary cancellation period coming to an end, and that by purchasing an e-book, your cancellation rights shall end immediately upon receipt of the e-book.

* 5. You acknowledge that all copyright, trademark and other intellectual property rights in the e-book are, shall remain, the sole property of Black Library.

* 6. On termination of this license, howsoever effected, you shall immediately and permanently delete all copies of the e-book from your computers and storage media, and shall destroy all hard copies of the e-book which you have derived from the e-book.

* 7. Black Library shall be entitled to amend these terms and conditions from time to time by written notice to you.

* 8. These terms and conditions shall be governed by English law, and shall be subject only to the jurisdiction of the Courts in England and Wales.

* 9. If any part of this license is illegal, or becomes illegal as a result of any change in the law, then that part shall be deleted, and replaced with wording that is as close to the original meaning as possible without being illegal.

* 10. Any failure by Black Library to exercise its rights under this license for whatever reason shall not be in any way deemed to be a waiver of its rights, and in particular, Black Library reserves the right at all times to terminate this license in the event that you breach clause 2 or clause 3.