

WARHAMMER
40,000



— A SEVERINA RAINE SHORT STORY —

TRIALS

RACHEL HARRISON

BLACK LIBRARY CELEBRATION 2019

4

WARHAMMER
40,000



— A SEVERINA RAINE SHORT STORY —

TRIALS

RACHEL HARRISON

BLACK LIBRARY CELEBRATION 2019

4

BLACK LIBRARY

To see the full Black Library range visit
blacklibrary.com



Multiple
formats
available



MP3 AUDIOBOOKS | BOOKS | EBOOKS

CONTENTS

Cover

Trials – Rachel Harrison

About the Author

An Extract from ‘Honourbound’

A Black Library Publication

eBook license

TRIALS

A Severina Raine story,
by Rachel Harrison

Columns of dirt shake themselves loose from the trenchworks around Severina Raine as she follows the rough-cut tunnel towards Dugout 30. The damp earth scatters against her armour, coat and cap with every heavy detonation from the surface. The Sighted have been systematically bombarding the length of the Antari lines for days in an effort to break through to the port-city of Atraxis, forcing Raine and her regiment, the Eleventh Antari Rifles, to take shelter underground, in the tunnels and dugouts and bunkers of the trenchworks. Raine's world has become one of cold, dark earth and stale air, of thunder and quaking and palls of dirt as she waits with her troops for the bombardment to break.

Or for something else to.

Raine walks the tunnel, as she does every two hours, checking in on the guard posts and looking into the hollowed caverns and dim-lit chambers where her regiment are billeted. She passes by roughly-hewn caves where the Antari are sitting and eating their half-rations. Some are praying, too, or maintaining their kit. Some are playing half-hearted field-games with hands of cards, or telling stories. All are battered and bruised and bandaged from repelling the ground assaults that are nearly as frequent and systematic as the bombardments. None are sleeping. It's impossible, with the thunder from overhead. No matter what they are doing, the Antari all stop and look up when Raine passes through. They all acknowledge her. Some do so with softly-spoken words. A murmured 'commissar', or 'sir'. Others do so with a salute, one hand over the heart. The rest simply catch her eyes before quickly looking away again. Raine does not linger. She does not need to. It is enough for her to see the Antari, and for them to see her. So, she keeps going down the tunnel with the thunder and the sound

of their lilting songs carrying after her. Dirty water drips down around her and collects on the floor in dark puddles. The air smells of oil and damp and rot, and vermin skitter just out of sight, disappearing into the dark spaces in the earthen walls between the support beams. The string-lumens rattle and turn, making long shadows.

Overhead, the Sighted bombardment continues, unbroken.

Dugout 30 is the last one on the tunnel line, and the smallest posting along the trenchworks. It is old. Older than this war. The ceilings are low and oppressive, supported by thick wooden beams and rockcrete blocks that creak and groan with every detonation from above. The dugout is made up of three distinct areas. A barracks that is big enough to sleep six, but currently sits empty, then an armoury and store room that is nearly as empty as the barracks. Lastly there is a small room that is little more than a cave, used for planning offensives. It is in this room that Raine knows she will find Andren Fel.

The storm trooper captain is sitting in the planning room alone, his hellgun in pieces on the table in front of him, each component carefully laid out and arranged. The barrel is heat-scored and blackened, and the matt-black paint is chipped from the stock. Fel's carapace armour is much the same. Burned and scored and split in places. Fel has the upper section of the rifle's receiver in one hand and is using a pin-shaped tool to free one of the internal components with the other. Two tin cups and a pack of dry rations sit on the table beside the component parts of Fel's rifle.

'Captain,' Raine says.

Fel looks up from his work. His face and throat are cut and bruised and his grey eyes are shadowed from lack of sleep. He is still sitting up straight, though. No slouching.

He still smiles at her.

'Commissar,' Fel says, and he pushes out the opposite chair with his boot.

Raine takes the seat he offers her, and then takes her canteen from her greatcoat pocket. She fills the tin cups in turn with water. It is lukewarm, with the oily quality of recyc, but it is all that she has left.

'Thank you,' Fel says, putting down the rifle's receiver carefully. 'Have you eaten anything?'

Raine has to think about it for a moment, counting the time backwards in bombardments.

'Not since first watch,' she says.

'Thought that might be the case,' Fel says. He cleans his hands on a strip of

linen, before opening the dry rations. He snaps the bar in two and passes her half of it.

‘Thank you,’ Raine says, in return.

Fel nods and goes back to working on the rifle’s receiver as Raine breaks up her half of the ration bar. She dips each piece in her own cup of water to soften it before she eats it. The bar is dense and mealy, with the distinct aftertaste of vat-grown protein. It’s something that she somehow finds herself missing when they are aboard the fleet.

‘Is it damaged?’ Raine asks. ‘The rifle?’

‘Not yet,’ Fel says. ‘The focusing crystals just need changing. The output’s so high that it stresses the array. The crystals get fogged, and when they fog they grow weak.’

There’s a soft click, then, and the component gives way. Fel tilts the receiver and lets the crystal array fall into his hand.

‘And then it’s only a matter of time before they break,’ he says.

Fel leans across the table and passes the array over for her to look at. When Raine holds the component up to the lumen light she can see the way the crystals have started to cloud, from the edges inwards. It looks like blood dropped into water.

‘How do you know when they have started to fog?’ she asks.

Fel sets about replacing the array with a new one from his kit. Raine knows that he could rebuild the rifle from scratch, if he needed to.

‘Slight delays in trigger-response. The bolts hiss when they should whisper. Sometimes there’s distortion in the beam.’

‘You just know,’ Raine says.

Fel nods. ‘Aye. You just know.’

A silence falls between them for a moment then, the sound of the bombardment growing to fill the space. Raine finds herself thinking about what the surface must look like, now. She has seen enough warzones to know that there will be little left of the Atraxian Plains but blasted, black earth. The agri-pastures will be gone. The irrigation canals. Even the remains of the dead will have been made as earth by the constant shelling. No need for graves.

‘I spoke with General Keene earlier,’ Raine says. ‘She said that the civilian evacuation is taking longer than they expected.’

Fel nods. ‘I heard. The word from Operations is another two days.’

‘Then we should expect it to be three.’

‘Sure enough,’ Fel says, without a trace of bitterness in his voice. ‘Whatever it

takes. Whatever He asks of us.'

It's the kind of answer Raine has come to expect from him. Andren Fel isn't the kind to flinch, or to falter. It is part of the reason that Raine trusts him in a way that she cannot trust anyone else. Certainly not the rest of the regiment. She thinks of them then, sitting in the bunkers and the dugouts, singing their songs and their praises. She thinks about their bruises and bandages and their hollow grey eyes. The dead they have had to leave for the barrage to bury. She might not be able to trust the rest of the Rifles, but she can read them easily. Anticipate their actions. It is what she was trained for. What she was made to do. Just like Fel does his rifle, Raine knows how people look and act and sound in the instant before they break, and she knows exactly what to do when it happens. That, too, is something that she was trained for at the scholam on Gloam. Raine remembers each of her trials keenly. The lessons learned and what was asked of her. In that moment, though, she finds herself thinking of one in particular.

'The last trial,' she says, putting down the broken lens array. 'Is that a practice they kept at the Schola Antari?'

Fel glances up from the rifle's receiver. 'Yes, they did.'

'Would you tell me about it?'

Fel nods. 'The last trials always fell in midwinter,' he says, continuing to work on the rifle as he talks. 'We were told very little. Just that we would be taken into the wilderness and left in the deepest part of the black forest, alone. That to pass the trial, all we had to do was survive the forest and find our way back to the walls before the sun sank three times.'

'But it wasn't that simple,' Raine says.

Fel smiles again, briefly.

'No,' he says. 'Nothing ever is.'

The words apply to so many things that Raine can't help returning the smile, however slight it may be.

'The masters kept the details from us, as is their right.' There is still no trace of bitterness in Fel's voice. Just that same measured calm. 'They did not tell us that we would be drugged into a slumber. Blindfolded. Bound at the hands and feet. They did not tell us that they would take our armour, our gloves and our boots and leave us in training clothes and soft shoes, with only our blades to see us back to the scholam walls.'

Fel puts down the parts of the rifle and takes the combat blade he carries from his belt. The carvings on the hilt catch the light as he turns it. Raine sees monsters and myths, just like those inked into Fel's skin.

‘It was dark when I woke,’ he says. ‘But that meant nothing. It is always dark that deep in the forest, because the trees twist their crowns together to keep the sun out. There was no snow, but the earth was frozen hard as stone. With no moon or sun or stars to see, everything looked black and white and grey. Everything but the blood.’

Fel pushes the knife point into the table’s surface so it will stand, then rolls back his sleeve and traces the shape of a long scar that runs down the inside of his left forearm with his gloved fingertips. The scar is pale. Older than all of his tattoos.

‘They made the cut as payment for the ones who watch the forest,’ he says.

‘The wyldfolk,’ Raine says, thinking of when he first told her the story, sitting on the hillside on Drast. Not more than six months ago, but it feels like a lifetime thanks to all of the blood they’ve spent since.

‘Just so,’ Fel says. ‘But the cut itself was as much a trial as the cold, or the darkness. It’s not just the fae or the trees who want for blood. It’s the wyldwolves, too.’

They are another Antari creature Fel has told her about before, though this one isn’t folklore or fable. This one is real. Raine sought out texts on them after listening to Fel’s stories of home. The biologists records list the wyldwolf as a category four apex predator. An intelligent, strongly-made pack hunter of the *Canid* genus specialised and made vicious by generations of isolation.

And definitely the top of the food chain, when all that you are left with is a knife.

‘I found the way east and kept to it,’ Fel says. ‘The black forests are as wicked as those who roam them. The trees will turn you and tempt you to keep you from finding the way out. The wyldfolk will take the shape of briars and block the way. They’ll snag and slow you long enough for the wolves to make ground. The only way is to stay the course and hold to the path.’ Fel shakes his head. ‘But even then, the wolves might still catch you up.’

‘By the time they did I’d used two of my sunsets,’ Fel says. ‘There were two of them. A bonded pair. One black, and one grey. Big and scarred and snarling. I knew that there was no hiding from them, and that I wouldn’t be spared by running.’

Raine thinks about all those who have tried. The ones who allowed themselves to weaken and break with no thought for those left behind. She thinks of the timepiece she carries, ticking away the moments in her pocket.

‘Nobody ever is,’ she says, absently, before she pushes the thoughts away. ‘So,

if you could not run or hide, what did you do?’

‘I stood my ground,’ Fel says. ‘Held my knife in guard and waited for them to come for me. They howled and snarled and snapped their jaws, trying to put me to flight, but I wouldn’t run. I shouted back at them until I was hoarse. That made the black-pelted wolf wary. It held its distance. But it angered the grey. It lunged for me, and knocked me down.’

He puts the flat of his right hand to the left side of his chest, across the collarbone. Just shy of the throat.

‘It got its teeth into me here,’ he says. ‘Tried to shake me to death.’

He pulls his combat knife out of the table.

‘But I had teeth, too, so I cut the wyldwolf back. It made a sound like all the hells come at once, but it let me go, though that hurt more than it did when it shook me.’ Fel shakes his head. ‘I don’t know how I got up, but I did. They were both looking at me, then, the wyldwolves. Not snarling or snapping. Just watching. The grey was bleeding all over the floor, and so was I.’

‘More payment for the forest,’ Raine says.

‘Just so,’ he says, with a smile. ‘And perhaps it was enough, because when I took a step forwards the wyldwolves turned and loped away. They left me to the rest of the trial. After that, I kept going east. All I remember is walking and bleeding. The wolf’s fangs had split something inside, so I had to try just to breathe.’

Raine knows that feeling from bad cuts and gunshots, and can’t help but imagine it all over again. Struggling for air when it surrounds you. The pinhole wheeze of a punctured lung. She shakes her head.

‘But you reached the walls,’ she says.

He nods. ‘The sun was low, but not sunk. It set the sky alight to the edges. All gold.’ He pauses, his grey eyes softening almost imperceptibly. ‘That, I do remember.’

That feeling Raine doesn’t know, and she can’t imagine it either.

‘I have never seen a sky so bright,’ Raine says. ‘Gloam was always dark, save for the light we made ourselves.’

‘The same is true for many places,’ Fel says. ‘Here, especially.’

A series of loud booms shake the room again, drowning out the distant singing of the rest of the Antari. Raine can’t help but watch the ceiling until the dirt stops falling. The dirt made of the dead.

‘Here, especially,’ she says, with a nod.

The noise returns to background thunder, and Raine stops watching the ceiling.

She takes a sip from the recycled water in her cup.

‘Our last trials came in midwinter, too,’ she says. ‘In my final year, it was almost all that the others would speak of. Always in whispers, and always after the lumens were dimmed in the evening, or before the dawn bells. On the gantries in the high winds. Somewhere the abbots could not hear.’

Fel laughs softly at the last part as he goes back to rebuilding his rifle. He is almost finished, now. Just the outer casing and the attachments to go.

‘The others would say they had heard what shape the trial would take,’ Raine says. ‘That we would be tethered at the oceanside like animals and left to face the tide. That we would be forced to choose from three chalices, two of which were poison. That we would be bound and blindfolded and left in the depths of the undercroft, or made to fight with nothing but our hands until one candidate remained.’

Fel isn’t laughing now.

‘There is always at least a little truth in rumour,’ he says, softly.

Raine nods. ‘In the months leading up to the day of graduation, the whispers stopped. Talking stopped. We existed alone, together, awaiting the moment we would be tested, but never knowing when it would come, or whether it already had. If we had already failed.’ Raine shakes her head, ruefully. ‘As if we could have failed without knowing it. Without punishment.’

She takes another sip of the oily, gritty water in her cup.

‘As we approached the ceremony day, some of the progena vanished altogether. Our numbers dwindled, the dormitories growing emptier and quieter. It kept me awake, that quiet. I had grown used to the company of others, even if I could call none of them friend. I would lay awake at night for hours, missing the noise.’ She pauses, and frowns. ‘Which is why I was still awake on the night that Yuzoh came for me.’

Fel stops his work on the rifle, and just listens.

‘It was just less than ten weeks before our day of graduation,’ Raine says. ‘When the dormitory door opened and closed I thought perhaps it was one of the others coming back. Illariya, perhaps, or Cozelt. But the footsteps weren’t right. I sat up in my cot and Yuzoh was there. He had a service pistol in his hand, and he was pointing it at me.’

Raine remembers that moment with utter clarity. The dull matt casing of the pistol. The howl of the wind through the scholam’s embrasures.

Yuzoh’s dark eyes, and the desperation in them.

‘I kept a blade close by, of course,’ Raine says. ‘And I drew it on him even

though I knew I wouldn't be quicker than a pistol shot, because I was damned if I would die without fighting it. But Yuzoh didn't shoot. He did what you should never do.'

'He hesitated,' Fel says.

Raine nods. 'I think it was because I was awake. He'd wanted to face the trial quietly, without facing me. He must have thought it would be easier that way.'

'Killing's killing,' Fel says. 'Nothing will change that. It's all blood.'

'It is,' Raine replies. 'In truth, I was surprised. Yuzoh was a good candidate. He was fiercely clever, and I had never once seen him lose his composure, no matter what was asked of us. In that moment, though, he looked furious. Frightened, even. He looked like a child.'

She shakes her head.

'I thought to disarm him. To knock him down and take the gun and use it on him as he had intended to on me. I started to move to do it, too, but then he spoke. Snarled the words at me. "Damn you, Raine," he said. He kept the gun trained on me all the while as he moved back to the door. Before he fled, he looked at me and spoke again.'

Two successive booms from overhead interrupt Raine momentarily. More dirt falls around her and she brushes it from the table. It sticks to her hands.

'It was just one word that he said,' she says. "'Sorry.'"

'Do you think he meant the apology for you, or for himself?'

'Both, I think,' Raine says. 'The God-Emperor, too. All who saw.'

Fel shakes his head. 'He must have been afraid.'

Raine remembers the way Yuzoh's hands shook as he pointed the pistol at her.

'Yes,' she says, softly. 'I think he was.'

She drains the rest of her water. It leaves a fine layer of wet grit and recyc scum behind.

'The next day, Yuzoh had vanished like so many of the others. I reasoned that I must have been his trial, and that he had failed in it. I continued with my training, and my duties, and I waited for my own. I felt dread over it, but that did not stop me wishing for it, too. That probably seems like madness.'

'It doesn't,' Fel says. 'Not at all.'

Raine smiles, faintly.

'After five days, I returned to my dormitory to find a sealed parchment scroll waiting for me. None of the others had touched it, because they knew what it was, just as I did.'

'The trial,' Fel says.

Raine nods. ‘When I opened it, there was a number written there. Five-oh-four. The number of one of the scholam’s isolation cells. The order script beneath it read, *Your trial is judgement.*’

Raine shakes her head.

‘I was sure then that I was to be hanged or shot. That Yuzoh had been my test, and that I had failed. But there is no denying orders, so I rolled the parchment and took it with me down to cell five-oh-four.’ Raine pauses, remembering. ‘You could hear the ocean everywhere in the spire, but especially in the underclofts. The water thrashed against the walls as if it wanted to break them. It was dark down there. Cold. The underclofts weren’t just ice-rimed but covered in thick coats of glittering frost. Five-oh-four was closed but not bolted, and when I opened the door, I saw no abbots. No gallows. I saw that the cell wasn’t for me, and I was not the one who had failed.’

‘It was Yuzoh,’ Fel says.

Raine nods. Just like the night he was sent to kill her, her first sight of Yuzoh in that cell is etched into her memory with exceptional clarity. He had looked like a shade, or a poor pict-capture. Thin, in a way that was more than physical.

‘He was manacled by his hands and feet and between us stood a steel table. There was a service pistol sitting on it. The same one he had failed to use on me.’

Fel exhales a slow breath, but he says nothing.

‘He looked up at me the moment he heard the door open,’ Raine says. She remembers Yuzoh’s eyes. They had looked like dark hollows in his face. Desperate. ‘I waited for him to get to his feet, but he didn’t. He just sat there.’

Raine turns the tin cup in her hands, absently. ‘He spoke, then. He asked if I was there to judge him, and I told him that I was.’

Those dark hollows in Yuzoh’s face had grown wider then. More desperate.

‘He told me to be reasonable. That the trial was a cruelty in a universe that already hates us, and that I shouldn’t give in to the abbots’ bloody games.’

‘And what did you say?’ Fel asks.

‘Nothing,’ Raine says. ‘So Yuzoh kept talking. He said that he had excelled in every other regard. That he didn’t deserve this. He told me about the heroism and nobility in his bloodline, and how that should be enough to prove his worth.’

Raine shakes her head. Yuzoh had started crying then, without a sound. No hysteria. Just tears painting slow trails down his face.

‘Yuzoh told me that he didn’t want to die. That he’d spared me, and didn’t that mean anything?’

Fel is watching her carefully now. 'Didn't it?'

Raine has thought about it many times since. In some small way she thinks about Yuzoh every time she makes the choice to take a life in the name of duty. Because it's always that.

A choice.

'I told Yuzoh that his failure to kill me was just that,' she says. 'A failure. I told him that it was weakness, and that his apology in the dormitory was proof to me that he knew it just as well as I did.'

'So, what did you do?' Fel asks, quietly.

Raine remembers picking up the service pistol. The cold weight of it and the sound of Yuzoh's voice as she took aim. One last word that told her without question that she was correct in her judgement and that Yuzoh was broken, far beyond repair.

Please.

'I didn't hesitate,' she says.

Fel falls silent then, and so does Raine, and for a moment the only sound is the thunder of the artillery as the Sighted bombardment continues overhead.

Unbroken.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rachel Harrison is the author of the Warhammer 40,000 novel *Honourbound*, and the short stories 'Execution' and 'A Company of Shadows', featuring the character Commissar Severina Raine. She has also written the short story 'Dirty Dealings' for Necromunda, as well as a number of other Warhammer 40,000 short stories including 'The Third War' and 'Dishonoured'.

An extract from *Honourbound*.



Commissar Severina Raine slides a fresh magazine into her bolt pistol with a hard click. She has replaced the eight-round magazine four times. Thirty-two shots fired.

Six of them to execute her own troops.

Raine has fought many wars on many fronts across the Bale Stars, and almost all of them have been against the Sighted, or their splinter cults. She has seen the way they turn worlds with whispers and false promises. The way they set workers against their masters, and guards against those that they are meant to protect. It's what makes them dangerous. When you battle the Sighted, you battle the people of the Bale Stars too. Scribes and soldiers. Priests and peacekeepers. The poor, the downtrodden, the ambitious and the reckless. For some of those that serve with her, that knowledge is too much. For some it is just fear that means they find the trigger impossible to pull. No matter the reason, they will find themselves looking down the barrel of her pistol, Penance, in turn. Just like Penance, Raine is made for the act of judgement. For the instant before the strike of the hammer and the burst of flame. She understands what it means to pull the trigger, and what it makes her. She is not driven by anger, or malice. That would undermine her purpose, which is the same no matter the crime.

To eliminate weakness.

Raine crouches down and takes Jona Veer's ident-tags from around his neck. They will not be sent back to Antar as with the honoured dead. They will be disposed of at the end of the fight on Laxus Secundus. His name will go with them, to be forgotten in time by everyone but her, because Raine never forgets the dead, honoured or not.

'Commissar.'

The voice belongs to Captain Yuri Hale. It's rough-edged, like he is. The captain of Grey Company is tall, like most Antari. Three deep, severe scars run down the left side of his face from hairline to chin. The Antari call him lucky

because he managed to keep his eye. They say he must have been graced with that luck by a white witch, or by fate itself. Raine doesn't believe in luck. She believes that Yuri Hale survives the same way the rest of them do.

By fighting for every breath.

'More power spikes from the inner forge,' he says.

Raine puts Veer's tags in her pocket, where they clatter against the others, then she gets to her feet and looks to the dust-caked screen on the auspex kit Hale is holding. When the regiment first entered the forges, more than six hours ago, it was registering soft spikes. Now the peaks are jagged, with the regularity of a great, slow heartbeat.

'Whatever the Sighted are doing in there, it's burning hot,' Hale says, and he frowns. 'Kayd's been picking up enemy vox too.'

'On an open channel?'

'Aye, it's as if they don't care if we hear it.'

'Anything of use?' Raine asks.

Hale's frown deepens, and it pulls at the scars on his face. 'The words were Laxian. Kayd reckons they said something like "it draws near".'

Despite the arid heat of the forge, Raine feels a distinct chill at those words. The tactical briefing two days prior had been clear. The primary forge on Laxus Secundus is an invaluable asset, both tactically and logistically, and not just because of the super-heavy tanks built there, but because of what waits in the inner forges. High Command did not disclose the purpose of the machines that Raine and the Antari would find there, only that they must not fall into Sighted hands. That for the enemy to use them successfully would be catastrophic, not just for the battle inside the forges, but for the war effort across Laxus Secundus and the crusade front.

'We are running out of time,' Raine says.

Hale nods. 'And support too. Blue Company are pinned down on approach to the Beta Gate, and Gold have yet to reach the inner forges. I'm calling the push now, before the Sighted can send whatever *draws near* against us, or we lose everything we've bled for.'

'Understood, captain,' Raine says. 'We will not fail.'

Hale glances to where Jona Veer lies dead. Raine knows him well enough to see what he is feeling by the set of his shoulders, and the way his eyes narrow. Hale is disappointed. Ashamed, on the boy's behalf. Raine also knows that, despite all of Veer's failings, it is hard for Hale to accept judgement against one of his own.

'Is there anything else?' Raine says.

Hale looks back to her. 'No, commissar,' he says. 'Not a thing.'

Then Hale gets to rounding up the Antari, voicing orders to the rest of his company pushing up through the machine halls. They have orders to fulfil, traitors to silence, and those machines to retake.

And her judgements are something that Yuri Hale knows better than to question.

Lydia Zane can feel the touch of death on every inch of her body. It makes her ache, skin to bones. The Sighted are doing something in the forges that casts a long shadow. Something that echoes in the immaterium like a scream. It has been the same for Zane since the moment she set foot on Laxus Secundus, death's long shadow clinging to her.

Like that damned hateful bird.

It is sitting there now, talons crooked around the rim of a girder. It is so very still, that bird. She has not yet seen it blink. It never cries, or ruffles its feathers. It just sits still and stares.

On the pillar below the bird's perch is a symbol, daubed in blood. The smell carries to Zane even over the heavy stink of smoke. The symbol is a spiral surrounding a slit-pupilled eye. The mark of the Sighted. The rings of the spiral are just a hair off perfectly spaced, and it makes the breath in Zane's lungs thinner, looking at it. The Sighted who painted the symbol lies broken at the foot of the pillar. So very broken. He is clad in fatigues and feathers, his skin inked with iridescent, metallic tattoos. The Sighted was one of the flock hunting Jona Veer through the machine halls. Zane caught sight of him slipping into the shadows between the half-built tanks during the gunfight. He thought himself hidden, but he was wrong. There is no hiding from Zane, because she does not need footprints or line of sight or even sound in order to hunt. She followed him into the darkness by the stink of his traitor-thoughts and came upon him painting the spiral and the slitted eye.

And then she broke him.

Zane winds her fingers tighter around her darkwood staff. The psionic crystal atop it hums. One at a time, bolts pop out of the pillar and join the objects floating in the air around Zane. Tools. Rivets and screws. Empty shell casings. Splinters of bone. They drift around her absently. The floor tremors under her feet as the panels start to bend upwards. Zane tastes blood, running thick over her lips. Blood on the pillar. Blood that makes up the painted eye at the centre of the spiral, unblinking.

Just like the bird.

‘Zane.’

She turns away from the bird and its black eyes and the way it never blinks them. Commissar Raine is standing there with her pistol drawn, but not raised. A threat in waiting. Zane finds she cannot speak. It is as if her lips have been sealed by all of that blood. The objects circle her like a storm, with lightning arcing between them. Raine does not flinch.

‘Control,’ Raine says, the word carrying clear.

The pistol does not move. The barrel is round and dark, like the eye painted in blood. Like the eyes of the bird. Like Raine’s eyes, unblinking.

‘Control,’ Zane slurs.

More blood finds its way into her mouth.

‘Tell me about the tree,’ Raine says.

‘About the tree,’ Zane says, her voice a rasp. ‘The singing tree.’

‘And why is it called the singing tree?’ Raine asks.

Zane blinks. Against the back of her eyelids she sees it. The singing tree standing on the cliff’s edge, the roots curling over it like the bird’s talons around the girder. The bone-white branches reaching up to meet Antar’s thunderhead sky.

‘Because that is where we would go to sing to Him on Earth,’ she says. ‘Because it was as close as you could get to the heavens.’

‘And He spoke to you there,’ Raine says.

‘In the rustle of the leaves,’ Zane says.

‘What did He say?’ Raine asks.

Zane feels the ache in her bones lessen. The objects orbiting her begin their fall to earth.

‘That I will be tested,’ she says. ‘And that I must never break.’

Metal objects clatter off the metal floor, and it sounds like a storm.

‘Lydia Zane,’ Zane says, finishing the ritual words. ‘Primaris psyker. Graded Epsilon. Eleventh Antari Rifles.’

The cables connecting to her scalp click as they cool. Zane wipes her hand through the blood on her face, painting a red streak up the back of it.

‘Apologies, commissar,’ she says, bowing low. ‘It is this place. The darkness in it.’

‘The Sighted?’ Raine asks.

‘I know the shape of their darkness,’ Zane says. ‘This is different. Things are changing.’

‘If you see anything, tell me,’ Raine says.

Zane knows that she means *foresee*, not just see, but it still feels like a cruel joke given the bird. The bird that she has been seeing for months now, since she walked the crystal tunnels on Gholl. The bird that she will speak of to no one, especially not to Raine, because to do so would be to invite death.

Because Zane knows that, like every instant of her life so far, the bird is just another test, and that she will not break.

Click here to buy [Honourbound](#).

THE BLACK LIBRARY NEWSLETTER



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

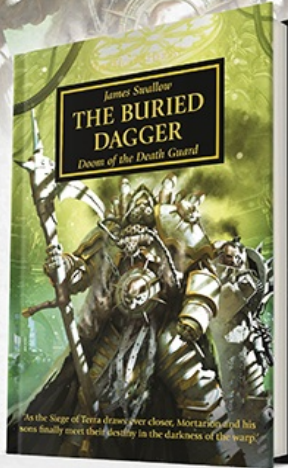
[SIGN UP NOW](#)

2 DAYS TO GO...



BLACK LIBRARY

CELEBRATION 2019



HARDBACK

THE HORUS HERESY: THE BURIED DAGGER

The final book before the Siege of Terra sees the primarch Mortarion strike a terrible bargain with the Ruinous Powers.



HONOURBOUND

Captured in exquisite detail, Commissar Severina Raine is released as a multi-part resin kit alongside the novel *Honourbound*.



HARDBACK



HARDBACK LIMITED EDITION THE HORUS HERESY THE PRIMARCHS - ANGRON: SLAVE OF NUCERIA

The bloodied saga of the primarch of the XII Legion, available in a lavish limited edition.



OUR MARTYRED LADY AUDIO CD BOX SET

Inquisitor Greyfax returns in this thrilling 4-part audio drama performed by a stellar cast. Starring Catherine Tate as Greyfax.



THE HORUS HERESY SKETCHBOOK

Carry the light of the Emperor with you wherever you go with this luxurious sketchbook.



PAPERBACK

BLACK LIBRARY CELEBRATION 2019 FREE ANTHOLOGY

An eclectic collection of tales from some of our most popular authors.



THE HORUS HERESY COASTER SET

Inspired by scenes from *The Buried Dagger*, this set brings the imagery from the 31st millennium to life in your home or workplace.



STORM OF IRON PAPERBACK



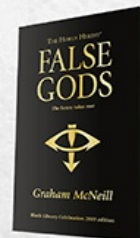
CITY OF THE DAMNED PAPERBACK

READERS' CHOICE FOR BLACK LIBRARY CELEBRATION 2019

Chosen by you! Two fan-favourites from the Black Library archives, available for a limited time.



HORUS RISING PAPERBACK



FALSE GODS PAPERBACK

THE HORUS HERESY BLACK LIBRARY CELEBRATION 2019 EDITION

The two opening novels of the epic Horus Heresy series, presented in a new celebratory edition. With a specially selected short story and brand new author afterword.

A BLACK LIBRARY PUBLICATION

First published in Great Britain in 2019 by Black Library, Games Workshop Ltd, Willow Road, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, UK.

Produced by Games Workshop in Nottingham.

Cover illustration by John Michelbach.

Trials © Copyright Games Workshop Limited 2019. Trials, 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: 978-1-78999-407-0

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.