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# EASY PREY

C Z DUNN



A DARK ANGELS SHORT STORY

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# EASY PREY

*by CZ Dunn*

The first sign that the Dark Angels were in trouble was when the bolter round smashed through the visor of Brother Jeremiel's helmet, exploded in his brain and killed him where he stood.

The huge figure of the Space Marine rocked uneasily for a second before collapsing to the dusty ground of the shanty town, thick crimson blood slicking the dark green ceramite of his power armour. The harsh peal of another shot rang out but, having just witnessed Jeremiel's fate, Brother Terach anticipated it and sought sanctuary behind the cover of a pre-fabricated hab-unit. By the time the report of the third shot echoed off the corrugated metal of the haphazardly arranged structures that formed the vague semblance of a town, Terach had already determined the shooter's location and the type of weapon he was firing. The fact that the unseen assailant was using a bolt pistol was strange enough in itself, the small mining planetoid having barely achieved a technological level beyond that of steam power, but the accuracy of the shot was what unnerved Brother Terach. To aim a shot so precisely that it shattered something as small as a helmet visor was difficult enough from a hundred metres. At two hundred metres it required the intervention of the divine and at three hundred metres it was bordering on the impossible.

At four hundred metres it was superhuman.

A fourth bolt shell found its mark quickly followed by a fifth, both shots punching through the thin metal frontage of the hab-unit before doing the same to the rear wall, a pair of starburst apertures just above the Dark Angel's shoulder evidence of their progress. Before the shooter could fire again, Terach emerged from cover and, sprinting in a zig-zag motion to present a harder target, covered the ground to the next hab-unit before shot number six disturbed the cool night air.

Their mission should have been a simple one. This world, though neither Jeremiel nor Terach had deemed it of operational importance to learn its name, was the subject of an Inquisitorial purge and when the Ordo Hereticus had requested assistance from the Adeptus Astartes, a single squad of Dark Angels had been despatched to aid the Inquisition's ministrations. A Slaaneshi cult had taken root on the world, its tendrils probing deep into the Administratum who ran the ore mining operations that made this planetoid more than just an obstacle to be avoided by the Rogue Traders and pirates who conducted their business in this sub-sector. Exterminatus had quickly been ruled out, the ore being vital to the construction of some tiny component used in the tanks built by neighbouring forge worlds, and so the Dark Angels' task was to eliminate all life on the planet while leaving the infrastructure intact ready for repopulation.

The Space Marines made short work of cleansing the two major population centres and, with only the outlying mining settlements left to be purged of any potential heresy, split into pairs to deliver the Emperor's judgment. They expected no opposition and would brook none should they find it.

The seventh shot shattered the window Terach was crouched beneath. As he closed the distance to the next flimsy metal structure, shots eight, nine and ten whistled harmlessly past him. The Dark Angel now had a clear view of the shooter's location, and when the twelfth shot sounded, the muzzle flash placed him at the shot-out window next to the door of the hab-unit he was sheltering in. Unslinging his own weapon, the Space Marine laid down fire to cover his approach to the final pre-fab before his objective and, as he nestled in the lee of the cover provided by the building, shots thirteen through seventeen sprayed wildly in his general direction. The shooter was getting desperate and Tarach could use that to his advantage.

Switching to full auto, the Dark Angel emerged boldly from the shelter of the hab and raked the shooter's hut with bolter shells, emptying the clip in the time it took him to reach the enemy position. Screams emanated from within and, preparing to face multiple combatants, Terach replaced the empty clip in his bolter before ripping away the corrugated front wall of the hab like a child tears paper from a gift.

Cowering in the corner of the pre-fab were a dozen or so miners, the reek of their sweat almost overpowering the scent of fear detectable by Terach's heightened senses. Several of them were already dead, caught by shots from the Dark Angel's fusillade while others were weeping and wailing, imploring the Emperor to spare them. At the head of the ragged group an old man stood

shaking, bolt pistol pointed weakly at the Space Marine, the tears running down his craggy face carving runnels in the grime that coated his cheeks.

Terach raised his own weapon and was just about to drain another clip when realisation hit him and he lowered the weapon ever so slightly, tilting his head in contemplation.

‘Wait. How did you—?’

The remainder of his query never left his lips as searing heat pierced him between the shoulder blades and the stench of super-heated hydrogen and scorched flesh filled the tight confines of the hab-unit. Terach relinquished his grip on his bolter and slumped to his knees, struggling to gather air into his ruined lungs as a vast shadow fell across him and the frightened miners.

‘Go,’ said a voice like rape and honey. ‘Go now.’

The miners did not need telling twice and, helping those who were too grievously wounded to move unaided, scattered from the wreck of the hab, abandoning their dead.

‘My weapon,’ the voice said as the old man made to exit and Terach strained to turn his head ever so slightly to see the old miner passing the bolt pistol to a gauntleted hand clad in Dark Angels green before fleeing after his co-workers.

‘Please, brother. This is some kind of mistake,’ Terach said. His secondary heart had kicked in, although he already knew he was dead.

‘I have long since ceased to be your “brother”,’ the figure said, circling around to stand in front of the stricken Space Marine. The newcomer wore robes over a suit of power armour, and a hood covered his features. A scabbard hung from his waist and he held a bolt pistol in one hand and a plasma pistol in the other.

‘What are you doing here?’

Terach was momentarily confused. ‘I... I’m here to carry out the will of the Emperor. To keep his dominions free from the taint of heresy and corruption.’

‘The Emperor, you say?’ The hooded figure was silent for a moment before crouching down so that his face was level with Terach’s. ‘I know the Emperor. This...’ He gestured to the bolt-riddled corpses of the miners lying in the corner of the hab. ‘This is not his will.’

Before Terach could protest, the muzzle of the robed figure’s bolt pistol was against the temple of the Dark Angel’s helmet. The back of Terach’s head disappeared in a crimson bloom, the report of the shot echoing loudly off the remaining walls of the metal hut.

It was still echoing as the robed figure ghosted out of the shanty town.

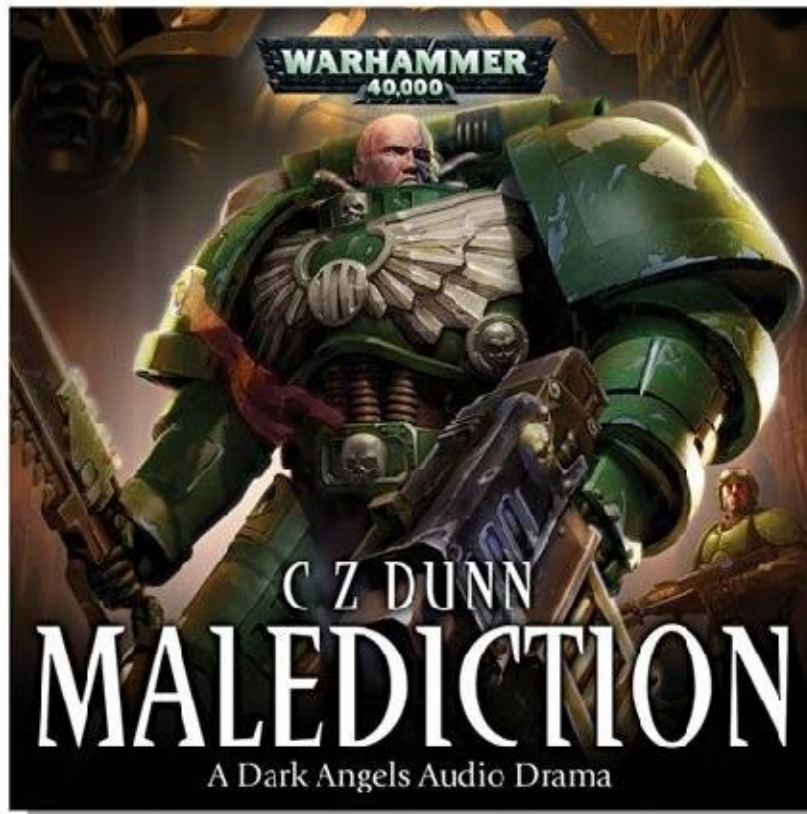
## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

C Z DUNN is a man of mystery, domiciled in the East Midlands. His multiplicity of special talents includes many years working in the publishing industry, with a strong leaning towards genre fiction. He is an expert in e-publication, audio production, zombies and cheese.

When asked to supply a bio, he replied, 'C Z Dunn is a thoughtcrime'... a statement to which there is no sensible reply.

Follow C Z's adventures on his blog at:

<http://tastemybrains.blogspot.com>



A great hero of the Imperial Guard recounts his tales of bravery and glory fighting alongside the Space Marines of the Dark Angels Chapter, but all might not be as it first seems...

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