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ANDY SMILLIE

A FLESH TEARERS SHORT STORY



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by Andy Smillie

I am dying. But this is not my first death. I have died twice before.

Blood. Blood was everywhere. It coated my armour like a second skin and hid the serrate symbol of my Chapter. It clogged the blunted teeth of my chainsword, silencing its adamantium roar. My brothers' weapons had fallen silent too, their wrath extinguished on the bodies of the enemy. The green skins lay waist high, a torn wall of corpses heaped around gore-filled craters. They had met us head-on, braying like maddened hounds as their crude weapons barked in their hands.

But they knew nothing of true fury. Nothing of the bloodlust that drives all sons of Sanguinius to war.

My own blood still thrummed in my veins, burning like the smouldering husks of the ork war-engines that studded the plain. A cloud of battle-rage hung over me, boiling my brain. Untempered anger wrenched a growl from my lips, demanding I kill again.

I obeyed without pause, slaying the nearest human in a heartbeat. The sodden plates of his carapace crumpled under a hammer blow of my sword. His body broke and tumbled. The pulse in my head quickened like a gleeful child as I slew another Guardsman. I killed another, then another and another. Humans die all too easily, I thirsted for righteous murder. Discarding my weapons, I began to bludgeon the fleeing weaklings with my gauntleted fists. Ignoring the beads of desperate las-fire that stung my armour, I wrapped my fingers around a head and squeezed. Viscera and brain matter smeared my helm as it burst. The tang of blood and excrement was like ambrosia. I bathed in the smell, relishing death's visceral facet.

Something hard thundered into my helm. I felt my jaw snap. My vision swam. I stumbled, falling as I was struck again.

I had long believed that in death, darkness would claim me. Instead, I awoke to find that I was the darkness.

Clad in night-black armour, I stood mag-locked in place, trapped in a plummeting drop pod. Red saltires daubed my pauldrons and greaves, marking me out as one of the damned. A polished Chapter symbol was the only sign that I had once stood among the Flesh Tearers. Nine of my new brothers were with me. Their optics slashed crimson holes in the gloom. They growled in sympathy with the rumbling drop pod. A vicious snarl guttered from my own throat, a bestial noise I did not recognise. I felt my muscles bulge beneath my armour, swelling with the urge to rend, to maim, to kill. The altimeter above my head spun down towards zero. For an instant I saw it spin in reverse, counting upwards. Faster and faster, it tallied the lives I had taken and those I surely would.

The pod shuddered as its ferrite petals slammed to the earth. Released from my bonds, I rushed forwards, driven by my thundering hearts, down the ramp and out into the jagged light of battle.

The enemy were everywhere. Lithe warriors in porcelain armour fought with swords that crackled with azure lightning. Others, in thicker, segmented battle-plate as dark as my own, fired explosive volleys into the distance. The porcelain aliens shrieked a battle-cry and charged towards us. I snarled, hatred bursting from my throat in rumbling waves. I could smell their fear, taste their dread at our arrival, and hear the weak thrum of their alien hearts. My sword arm rose and fell, rose and fell, possessed of its own murderous mind as I cut and hacked with a vigour I had never known. Orphaned limbs and broken torsos rained against me like a fleshy storm as I ripped through their ranks. My wrath was unceasing. They would all die. I would kill them. I—

Blood. Blood pooled in my mouth as a crackling sword speared my primary heart.

Darkness took me. Yet I was not dead. I was reborn, gifted a new life as death incarnate.

Tortured fragments seared my mind as I awoke entombed. Nightmare remembrances of neural drills, bonesaws and sacs of bio-fluid that had hung above me like a puppet's strings. The Chapter's Sanguinary Priests and Techmarines had interred me within the adamantium womb of a Dreadnought. A burning memory haunted me, the impotent rage I'd felt while strapped to their workbench. I screamed. A metallic roar sounded in place of my voice. My mortal form was shattered, my vocal cords long since atrophied. My world had

been reduced to snatches of data bundles, fed to my brain through the sarcophagus's sensoria. My actions were left to the interpretation of consecrated machine-levers and vox-amplifiers. I screamed again, smiling as I listened to the distorted roar.

I was steel and I was wrath, and nothing more.

A thousand klaxons wailed. Their incessant screeching roused my ire, drawing me from my slumber to a vaulted corridor. The broken bodies of Flesh Tearers and the savaged remains of human auxiliaries coated the floor in a sickly flesh-paste. Weapons fire thundered from every possible direction. I growled in response, slamming the massive power fists attached to my adamantium torso into the wall. I powered into an adjoining corridor, crushing the protruding vertebrae of a dozen creatures beneath the ridged plates of my feet. I roared, elated, as my audio-receptors replayed the snap of xenos spines, looping the sound into my cortex. A fresh horde of creatures leapt towards me. I caught one in my fist and pulped it with a thought, while flame spat from my other, washing away the rest of the brood and cleansing the corridor of their sickening taint.

A growl sounded from behind me. I turned, though not quickly enough. A monstrous creature, its mouth dripping acid-fire, barrelled into me. It mewled in pain as my fist struck its face, but continued to press me into the wall. Its claws, each as long as I was tall, tore into me. Yet I felt no pain as it pulled back from the embrace, bisecting me in one fluid twist. My ruined sarcophagus thudded to the floor, like the spent shells of some mighty siege cannon.

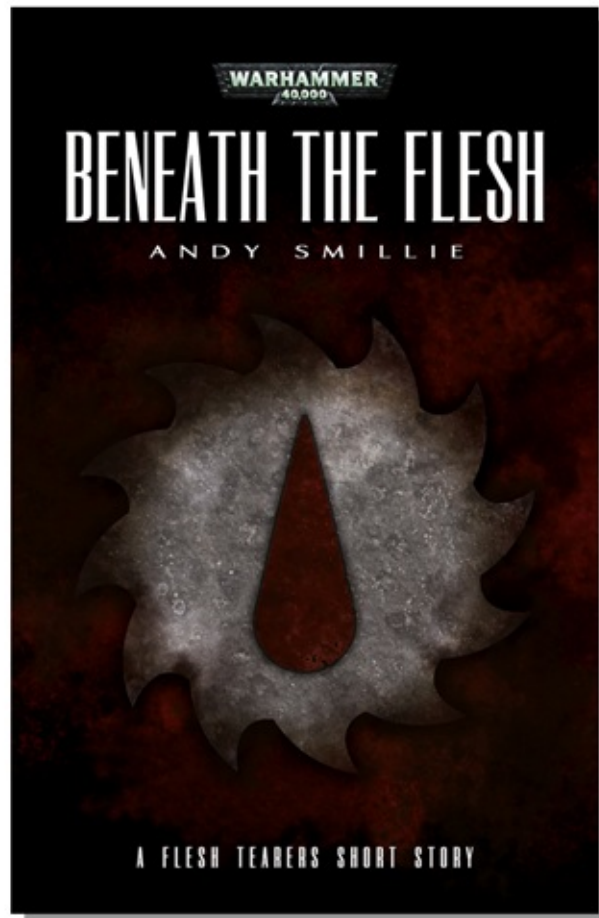
My power cell is damaged. My brain function will soon cease. I shall not awaken from this final death, and I am glad.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Forged from beef and brawn, ANDY SMILLIE emerged from the blacksmith's fire like a slab of Scottish iron. Hailing from the northern reaches of Glasgow, he crossed the border into England intent on conquest, but instead found gainful employment at Games Workshop.

Leaving a trail of carnage in his wake, he eventually settled in the Black Library where he works in marketing by day and as a literary superhero by night. His writing credits include a swathe of articles for various sci-fi, fantasy and hobby magazines. His debut work of fiction, 'Mountain Eater', was released in 2011 in the digital publication Hammer and Bolter. You can read his blog at

<http://asmileylife.wordpress.com/>



The Flesh Tearers descend upon an Imperial world to retrieve gene-seed from fallen brothers.

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