

A detailed illustration of a Grey Knight from the Warhammer 40,000 universe. The character is shown from the waist up, wearing intricate, dark blue and silver armor. He has a stern expression and is holding a glowing blue sword in his right hand. His left hand is raised towards his chest. The armor features various symbols, including a golden cross on his chest and a skull on his belt. The background is a plain, light color, making the character stand out.

WARHAMMER
40,000

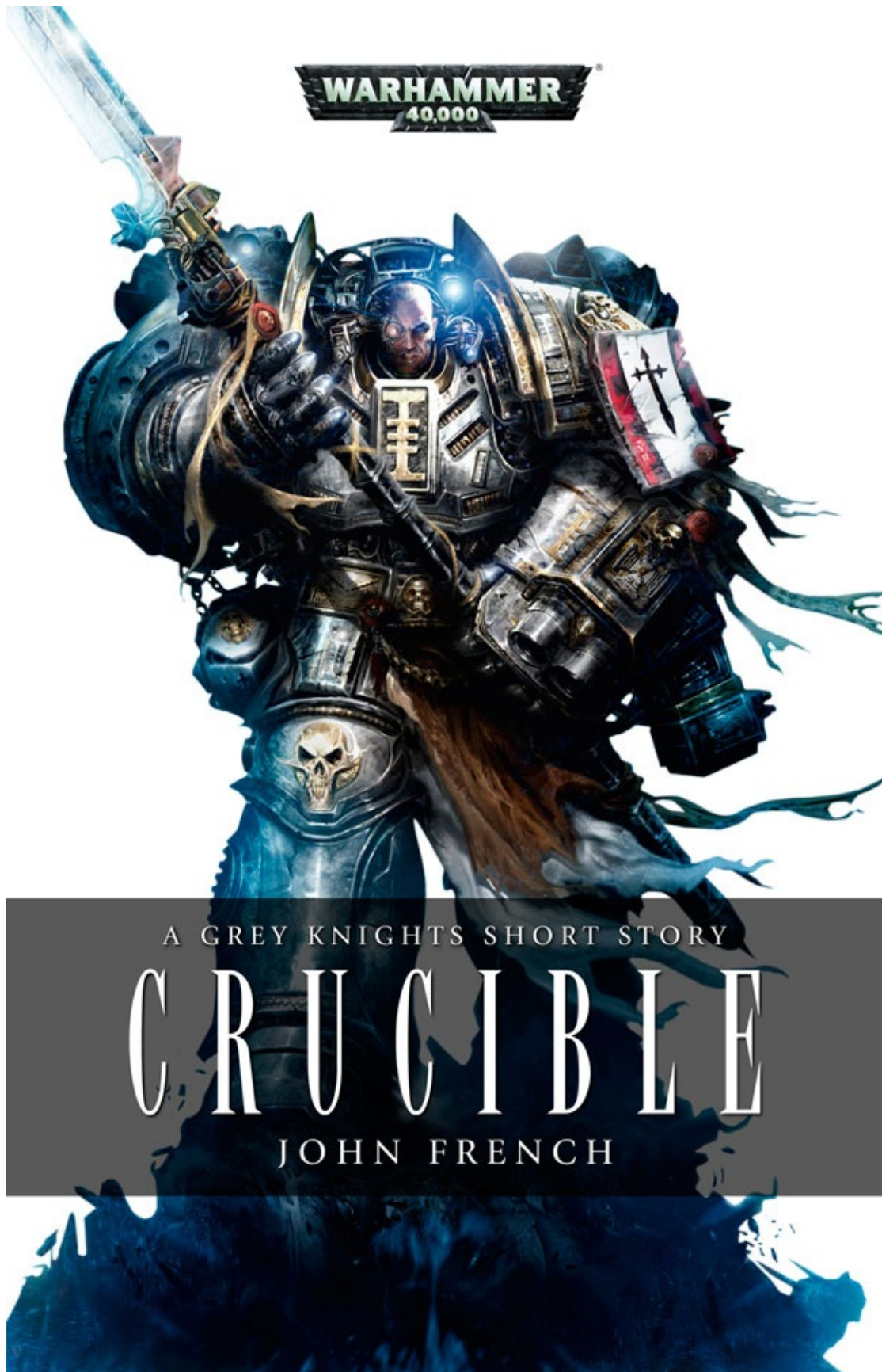
A GREY KNIGHTS SHORT STORY

CRUCIBLE

JOHN FRENCH



WARHAMMER
40,000



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*'We die, though our war is eternal,
We are doomed, but we walk into darkness,
We are forgotten, yet the future is our gift to humanity.'*

– Oath of the Seventh Brotherhood,
attributed to its first Grand Master.

Crucible Rift – time determination not possible/ non sequitur

I cut the visual display from my helm. Blackness fills my mundane eyes. There is a second when I am aware of nothing but the breath easing from my lungs, and the cold ache of wounds numbed but not healed. I know the left-hand side of my body is torn and blackened. My mind can sense the dance of heat in the cooling gouges of my armour. The halberd in my hands is trembling, resonating to the rising pulse of the warp.

The darkness stares back at me. Then the forest begins to form in my sight. At first it is flat, like paint applied to a black wall. I see grey trees hunched and leafless, their twigs and branches stroking a rising fog. The branches begin to move, and the trunks sway like shadows thrown by a guttering lamp. A wet iron smell fills my mouth and nose. I turn my head slowly. The servos click in concert with the movement, and I feel an electric tingle of sympathy with my damaged armour. The forest around me expands into the distance as I look at it. My ears hear silence, but my mind feels the gale that is rising with the fog.

None of this is real, at least not in the sense that anyone sane would consider

real. I am not walking through a forest. There is no fog, and the wind I hear in my ears is a lie. If I am walking through anything it is along the corridors and passages of the *Crucible*, but that is a failing truth. The physical reality of the voidship is crumbling as the rift opens at its heart: its angles are broken, its existence spiralling around its doom like draining water. The warp reigns here now, and so I have closed my eyes to reality, and allowed my soul to see what my flesh cannot. The warp is a mirror; its form is the light and shadow we cast on it. So it is that I see the death of the *Crucible* as a winter forest.

I glimpse the rift point as a cave-like darkness beyond the trees. It is growing, ripping wider. Something waits within that darkness, building the strength to birth itself into this world. I begin to walk forwards.

The darkness shifts and the perspective of the forest changes. Distances expand and contract. Shadows solidify and objects break into splinters and haze. I see eyes amongst the trees, glittering, moonlight cold. Snow crunches beneath my foot; it was not there when I began my step. Snowflakes rise on the wind. A shape moves on the edge of sight, slithering and padding, night black against powder white.

I kindle an image of flame in my mind. I hold the image, allowing it to form a pattern in my thoughts. I begin to burn. Flames rise from the silver of my armour. A sphere of light now walks with me. The shadows recoil and beneath me the snow melts. Riveted metal gleams under the slush. The forest twists around me as I walk through it. Corridors of tree trunks and bent branches form and vanish. The ground rises and falls like ocean waves. I turn my mind's eye and meet the eyes amongst the trees; they are closer. Coal-black shapes slide against the silhouettes of tree trunks. The haft of my halberd begins to vibrate in my hands. Its blade is a frozen sheet of flame in my sight. Howls crack the cold air.

They are coming.

A daemon breaks from the trees. Its shape forms as it crosses into the circle of light. It has the body of a hound. Shadow peels back from scale-clad skin. A mouth opens in its snout like a crack splitting wide in fire-blackened clay. Its hate and hunger snarls across my thoughts as its jaws hinge wide. I can smell grave rot and blood. It bounds forwards. I drop into a half-crouch, and ram my halberd forwards. The blade tip punches into the wolf's neck. The shaft of the halberd rams back into the ground, takes the weight of the hound for a second then jerks upwards. I stand and turn, flipping the daemon over my head. I send a splinter of anger through the halberd's core and the hound dissolves into ash and

frost.

I begin to spin my halberd, weaving it between my hands as power flows through its core. They come to meet me out of the dark. They have the shapes that millennia of nightmare have given them: skinless bodies of blood-slick sinew, spheres of reaching hands, horned heads that grin with iron fangs. I rise and pivot, spraying bolt-shells in a wide arc. Explosions rip through the fog, parting it with blessed fire. Seen by my mind the detonations are pure white, like the burning of magnesium. My storm bolter clatters silent.

The daemons howl as one. The snow melts and then freezes harder. The ground twists and rolls as my mind burns into the warp. The trees retreat, their branches lacing through the fog to close off paths. Others reach upwards, growing like spreading thunderclouds.

A lance of rainbow fire strikes me, its tongues crawl across my armour. I shiver as the warp scratches against the sigil-laced silver. The daemons scream and the circle closes. I cut, muscles and will unwinding into a bright crescent around me. The blade parts flesh and bone. The wind catches the blood as it sprays out and lifts it into the fog in a spreading pink stain. My cut reaches its end. Light stirs in the cavernous darkness of the rift beyond the trees.

A waking roar echoes through the trees. I hear the call of carrion birds and the crack of bones in that cry. My enemy is almost here, it is almost awake in our world. I have to end this now. Every heartbeat spent here is strength lost to my enemy.

I call the fire. I speak its name and it answers. I feel the inferno roar in my ears and my skin feels colder than the void. I am glowing, my armour changing from silver-grey to coal-orange. A flayed lupine skull roars as its jaws close on my wrist and its teeth touch my armour. Ice spreads across the daemon's muzzle, its jaw and teeth shattering like struck pottery. The fire unfolds from me like wings, like a cloak spilling in the wind, like the breath of a dying god.

Warp transit to *Crucible* Rift - 8883313.M41

The ship that brought me to the *Crucible* was named the *Blade's Peace*. It could have carried a handful of my brotherhood, but I was the only one aboard. Her captain and the crimson-clad crew did not speak to me except to relay details of our progress through the warp. The *Blade's Peace* was as fast as a ship could be, but still I stood two nights' vigil before we arrived. Of those two nights the silence is what I remember now. Not just of a ship under power, but the silence

that only those with our gifts and our brotherhood understand: the silence of a mind walking into darkness alone. I spent those silent hours in the candle-filled armoury.

The serfs disassembled my wargear down to the smallest rivet. I held each component, feeling the traces of its past, my past, in every touch. I saw the fires of Locara dancing against a black sky. I felt the death of the Revelator of Velt in the heartbeat before the daemon took his sight. I smelled the cold air of Hynal thick with the ozone of our teleportation. A thousand fragments caught like threads on the thorns of time. These moments are my life. They are the marks I made by the passage of my life. Eventually they will be forgotten.

I had no life before I became a son of Titan. A child was born, grew and lived, but he is not me. He is a ghost of a boy that died long ago. Not even I remember his name.

I had rebuilt my armour and weapons three times before the captain told me that we had arrived. Her voice was cold. She addressed me only as 'lord' while I was aboard her ship. Her name is Lydia, and I wonder if she realises that she is my ferryman to the underworld. Perhaps she does. She has served the Grey Knights for almost a century, and carried many to battles that will see them dead. Perhaps that is why she spoke with machine-like formality. Some say that it is our kind that lack humanity. I don't believe this. Everything I have seen tells me that mankind holds infinitely greater inhumanity in its soul. Space Marines are not inhuman, we are focused.

I remade my armour for the last time, and the serfs clad my flesh with its second skin. There were dozens of figures around me, Chapter serfs in red and white robes with mirror eyes, tech-priests that clicked and muttered in static over every wire and fastening. The air was thick with incense smoke. I was surrounded but all I could hear was my mind echoing in the void. Finally my helmet closed over my head and a web of projected data filled my eyes. I became a hunched figure of silvered plate. The tapers of seven hundred and seventy-seven purity seals hung from me like dry leaves. They rustled as I moved to take my halberd from its iron coffer.

I did not go to the bridge. Instead I walked the kilometre-long passages to the launch bay. I asked the captain to channel the data from the ship's sensors to the left eye of my helmet display as I walked. I watched the *Crucible* draw closer. It looked like a crenulated slab of dulled metal. The space around it still bore bruises of its panicked attempt to return to safety. That desperate hope was false. The *Crucible* was doomed, its part now only to serve as the stage for my final

battle. A rift was forming like a cyst in the ship's guts, gorging on reality, swelling in size.

I did not know why the rift had formed. Perhaps it had been a Navigator following a route through the warp that resonated like a ringing glass. Perhaps some amongst the crew had dreamed the same dream by chance, and that dream had grown. Perhaps it was a thousand factors spread across hundreds of years, aligning slowly like the cog teeth of a great clock. There were countless possibilities and none of them mattered.

I reached the launch chamber. The boarding torpedo waited for me, lying in its cradle like a dissected bullet. I felt the deck tremble under my feet as the *Blade's Peace* fired its thrusters, clipping its momentum until it was at a dead halt three thousand kilometres from the stricken ship. I climbed into the cramped cave of the boarding torpedo. My armour mag-locked to the torpedo's inner surfaces and the hatches closed around me. In the darkness I cut the feed from the *Blade's Peace* and let my thoughts settle. At that moment I realised I had one regret: I would have liked to speak to my brothers.

Crucible Rift – time determination not possible/ non sequitur

The only sound is the wind stirring snow through the trees. I stop and turn in a slow circle. The trees have moved, and I cannot see the rift point any more. Snow becomes a halo of vapour as it tries to touch my cooling armour. Quiet surrounds me like a tide waiting at the edge of the shore. The trees seem to press close, their black trunks creaking in the wind. I shift my grip on my halberd. The snow swirls thicker, settling in a silent blanket.

A sharp crack splits the quiet. I turn, looking for its source. Another crack, then another, each like a bone splintering. I see it then. A tree is splitting, and something is pulling itself from the trunk. Scabs of black bark cover its back. Its limbs and torso are soft and pale, like drowned skin. Yellow sap oozes from lesions and sores in its flesh, rolling down its body in a sticky sheen. It steps away from the tree, leaving an impression in the trunk. The ground shakes as it turns. Its head is set low on its shoulders, a flat wedge split by a wide mouth and slit nostrils. It straightens to twice my height. Its eyes are the dead white of cataracts.

It lunges at me, its hands and arms growing as it moves. I bring my halberd around as I step back, and cleave through its arms at the wrists. The daemon

shrinks back, yellow blood showering from the stumps of its arms. It roars, and vomits a stream of thick sap over me. My armour begins to ring with warnings. Acid is eating into the joints and cracks between the silvered plates. Maggots and grubs begin to chew into the softening metal. The warding runes etched into each plate are burning with heat. For an instant my focus falters. The daemon strikes me then. Its hands have regrown, and a blade-like finger punches into my gut and spins me through the air. Damage warnings shriek in my ears. It strikes me again as I fall. I hit the ground in a tangle of limbs and buckled armour.

I start to rise, snow and blood falling from me. The daemon is walking towards me, the slowness of victory in its stride. Weeping burns mark its flesh where it touched my armour. It grunts, and opens its toad mouth to show a black tongue rolling behind hooked teeth. I come to one knee. Pain reaches into my chest as I move. My halberd shakes as it takes my weight. I look weak, as if my strength is failing. It is not a complete lie.

The daemon bellows and charges, its mouth wide. I stand at the last instant. The point of my halberd meets the daemon's descending mouth. The force of the daemon's charge punches the blade through the top of its skull. Its bulk rams into me, and its arms rake the air. It is still alive. It shakes its head, forcing its bulk down my halberd. Its eyes are level with me, black blood oozes from its nostrils. The halberd twists in my grip. My hands are slick with pus and blood. I step back, twisting the halberd with all my strength. My armour screeches. The halberd turns in the daemon's skull. I push down and the blade saws out of the bottom of the daemon's head, splitting its jaw and cutting down through its torso. I pull the blade free and spin the tainted blood from its edge. The daemon collapses, and begins to burn.

I look up. I can see the waiting cave of the rift. It has grown wider, and suddenly I can feel the wind howling towards its black mouth. A shriek rolls through the forest. It is the sound of a monstrous birth, of triumph, of a nightmare waking. I run to meet it.

Titan – Augurium 0874313.M41

Three sent me to the *Crucible*. They shared their deliberation with me so that I would know why: so that I would understand. I do understand.

The three gathered in spirit rather than body. They had no need of names or greetings. They knew each other to a degree that no bond of blood or kinship can match. They emerged out of the darkness between each other's thoughts. Each of

them was a voice alloyed with notes of sensation and imagery. As they came together their thoughts became one. The Grand Master of the Seventh Brotherhood, his brother-captain and the prognosticar ceased to exist as separate beings. They became voices running through one consciousness. Such a gathering is an eye-blink of thought in mundane reality. For the three this state is more real than the touch of hands or the sound of voices. It is called communion.

+The projection is certain?+

+Certainty cannot be taken for granted.+

+True.+

+The likelihood of it being a different entity?+

+Dependent.+

+What is the dependent factor?+

+How we respond.+

+Explain.+

+One of the highest choirs of daemons will manifest on the *Crucible*.
We cannot prevent that; the cogs of fate have already turned. But
which daemon will manifest is not certain.+

+There is something you are not sharing, prognosticar.+

Silence filled the thoughts of the communion. In physical reality the quietness lasts for less than a microsecond; in the telepathic representation it lasts for the equivalent of several unsettled minutes.

+The matter could be made certain.+

+How?+

+There is one amongst your brotherhood whose name is set in
opposition to the entity.+

The communion became silent again.

+If he is sent alone then the daemon will come. It may not realise why,
but it will come. It will not be able to help it.+

+ For this victory there is a price.+

+All victory has a price.
We send him alone.+

Crucible Rift – time determination not possible/ non sequitur

I blur as I move through the forest that is a ship. My thoughts turn my movements to quicksilver. The rift's mouth yawns in front of me. I can feel more of the daemons oozing through the cracks at the edge of sight. I can taste their thirst and hunger panting at my heels. In front of me I see my doom come. It pulls itself from the rift like a great serpent coiling from a cave. Ectoplasmic birth fluid sheens its hunched body. Growing muscles twitch under its translucent skin. It twists on the ground, mewling with broken croaks. Quills spout from its flesh and begin to unfold into pale feathers. It raises its head and begins to stand. Around me I hear the lesser daemons begin to shriek as they melt back into the forest.

I take another stride forwards.

The daemon straightens. Its body is still forming, feathers elongating and colouring like an oily rainbow. Its spindle limbs lengthen, spouting delicate white claws. It towers above me. Its eyelids crack open. They are two holes into a fire.

I send my mind forwards in a whip of lightning. The fog flashes white around me. The lightning strikes the daemon and spreads across its flesh. It is not ready, its powers still aligning to existence in the physical world. For this instant I have an advantage.

The daemon falters, stumbles perhaps. I feel its anger on the wind. I surge forwards. The daemon screeches and charges to meet me. Shadows billow behind it like smoke. Its presence is like looking into a star. My mind lashes out again. Forked lightning bounds across the snow, coils around the daemon and

tightens. My mind bites into its essence, digs deep, breaths pain into its core. It screams and twists, scattering black blood to the snow. Then it falls in a tangle of feathers and thrashing limbs. My lightning cages its body where it lies. I move closer, the tip of my halberd pointing at its twitching body. It seems smaller now, shrunken in my mind's eye.

The wind rises around me. It is howling, pushing wildly. A cold blue light is rising through the trees like a sapphire sun. I can hear branches cracking and trunks creaking in the fog beyond my sight.

I look back down to the lightning-chained figure at my feet. Power builds within me, growing sharper with every instant. I raise my halberd, the words of banishment forming on my tongue. Perhaps the prognosticar was wrong; perhaps I will not end here, perhaps that is not a price that needs to be paid. The silver edge of my halberd slices down towards the daemon's neck.

It vanishes. My halberd slices into the ground in a shower of molten sparks. I feel the cage of lightning gutter out as the illusion it held dissolves. I realise how wrong I have been, how I have let myself be blinded. The daemon I came to banish is already here; it has been here all along, watching, waiting for me to realise how powerless I am.

I hear a laugh on the wind. I turn. The daemon steps from the shadows and mist. It looks like nothing, like an absence sliced into the world. Looking at it feels like falling. It looms taller and taller, like a shadow cast by a growing fire.

It is a moving shadow now, jagged features picked out by an inner furnace glow. A talon-tipped hand solidifies the instant before it thrusts at my gut. I pivot, and feel the talon's tip gouge a molten line across my torso plating. I turn my halberd to cut as I spin. It is a kill stroke, intended to slice from one side of the torso to the other. But this is not a battlefield, it is a war fought in living dreams. The daemon whips back, snake-fast, then lashes out again. I bring my halberd around just in time. Blade and talon meet.

And the dream reality shatters.

My perception breaks into pieces, cleaving along planes of weakness. I have enough time to realise that this is what the daemon wanted all along, that I am entering the true battlefield, that I will die, and that I might fail.

My mind's eye blinks. I cannot see. The blackness around me is not an absence of light; it is the absence of anything to see.

'Why did you come here?' The voice is made of razors. Wounds open in my psyche, and I feel strength bleed from my mind into the warp. Isolated from my

body this is a duel of minds.

‘It is my purpose.’ I say, and my will hardens over my mind like stone.

‘To die?’ The voice is grave, without a note of mockery or contempt. I am not surprised. Few monsters cackle.

‘Yes.’

‘A tragedy.’

‘A duty.’ I pause. I feel that if I do not speak then there will be nothing, not even my sense of self. ‘This is the sightless realm, the land of the mind without the spirit, is it not?’

It chuckles now. I can feel it circling my consciousness, its words and laughter tracing over the surface of my thoughts like cold fingers over skin.

‘Is it? To you perhaps. To me it is the membrane of consciousness. It exists throughout the universe, a skin of connection between all sentience. From a certain point of view there is only one sentience. All you mortals are just the sparks falling back to the fire.’ The voice pauses. Here in the blind silence I have no way of knowing how long passes before it speaks again. ‘You know who I am.’

‘Yes,’ I say. I feel the daemon’s presence close to me. ‘You are folly, and hubris. You are abomination.’ I send my will with my words, cutting out into the darkness. It rolls with a sound of thunder.

The daemon laughs, and suddenly the sound comes from all directions.

‘Poetic. Crude, but poetic. You are not the first of your silver-clad kin that I have met. Do you not think it strange that your enemies know you, but you kill those you protect if they learn that you exist?’

I remain silent. I have considered the truth the daemon states, we have all considered it; that and countless other heresies. The truth is one of the many gates through which we pass to become sons of Titan. Only those who can survive its cut truly survive to become grey, to die in battle for humanity. Those who cannot resist die sooner.

‘The first Space Marines were made to fight for illumination, to bring truth and knowledge. Your kind is intended to bury it. That is the tragedy, is it not?’

I feel its power building around my mind. The pressure begins to grow. I feel my soul buckle.

‘You are a remarkable soul, you and all your kind. You are the Imperium’s sacrifice, its sons offered up in hope of survival. You die for an empire that will never know that we lived. You do not push back the darkness, nor bring a new dawn. You fight a war that you can never win, only prolong.’ The crushing force

of its power presses from every direction. 'I am glad we had this time at least. But you will die here.'

'I know.'

A wave of mental force radiates from me. My mind is cold with fury. The pressure releases and suddenly there is light rushing into my eyes.

My true eyes open to the physical world. I am standing within the guts of the *Crucible*. The forest is gone, the metaphor collapsing into a reality that stinks like a death pit. I am standing in a cave of crushed metal. Light seeps through a spreading web of cracks; it is the icy light of oblivion. The walls around me are flexing and compressing with the sound of tearing steel. I can see sheets of flesh stretched amongst the broken girders as they shift like the branches of trees. Red-black liquid sheens flat surfaces. Droplets of oil, blood and bile spin without gravity through the air.

The daemon clings onto the tangled wreckage. Loose skin and pale half-formed feathers cover its body. Its head is a flayed vulture skull on the end of a scaled neck. The metal wreckage is glowing blue hot where its claws grip. A stench of rotting fish and crushed flowers fills my nose even though my armour is sealed. It looks at me and I hear it laugh in my skull. I lunge at it as it unfolds to strike.

Claws score across my temple and sink into my shoulder joint. I fall. The daemon is on me, worrying at me like a carrion bird on a corpse. Its flesh is burning from the touch of blessed silver but it roars and strikes me again. The glass of my eyepiece shatters inwards. I feel warmth on my face. I am blind in my left eye. The smoke of burning feathers is a choking reek in my throat. The cracks running through the ship yawn wide. The cold light of the warp is nova bright. Sympathetic wounds blister my skin inside my armour. I feel the daemon's power flow through its claws and into my flesh. My blood is boiling. Fresh wet pain explodes in the right of my chest. I have one heart now, like a mortal.

I still hold my halberd in my hand. I try to rise. The daemon rears and strikes down. I bring the haft of my halberd up to meet the blow. The daemon's claws close over the weapon. Warp energy gushes into the halberd's crystal core. The weapon shatters before my eye. The light burns my remaining retina out before I can blink. In the physical realm I am truly blind now.

The daemon is all around me. I am suffocating in folds of oblivion. This is the realm of war fought not with blades or words but with the raw heat at the core of

our being.

I retreat, solidify, harden. I feel my soul become sharp. I am the wetted edge of a blade, the cutting caress of a razor. It was always going to end like this. It is the only way. It has always been the only way.

I say my name for the first time.

‘I name myself. Istafel, son of Titan. Knight of the Seventh Brotherhood.’

I hear the daemon scream. It recoils, spilling heavy panic in its wake like blood billowing from a wound. I taste copper, cinnamon and smoke. My name has cut it. As we are weapons so are our names. Each name is forged in opposition to one of the great daemons of Chaos. It sets us against them, binds us to them even as it repels them. In speaking my name I have thrust a sword into the daemon’s essence. It is hissing at me now, babbling with a hundred voices. It has begun to see what I intend and why I came here alone. It is afraid.

‘I name myself and I name you.’ The daemon’s name comes out of my lips in a bloody flow of syllables. I feel ice spreading through my soul, spreading in dead nothingness. I become a flicker of purpose sustained by pain.

The daemon strikes me. I feel its claws slice through my left arm and torso. It lifts me into the air. I force the words from my throat even as my lungs fill with blood.

‘I name us and bind us together, blood and soul, and fate.’

I hear an instant of the daemon’s shriek then I embrace it to me. I feel fire blazing from my empty eyes. The flesh of my face burns to the bone. The daemon tries to pull away but it cannot. We are bound together now. We will burn as one.

Every molecule in my body blows apart. My thoughts scatter. I have no centre. Time and memory become a flat plateau. I know everything. I can see every thought I ever had, every memory contained in my cells, all those secrets hidden from my mind. Nothing is truly lost. I see my own birth. I know the name that I once had before I was remade. I see the possible deaths that would have been mine: bleeding out in the dank guts of a stone city, blood oozing between my fingers from the slit in my belly; the fire rising around me as the mob cries witch; the hunger slowly leaching my life away as winter deepens. These are not ghosts, or projections. They are real. I can choose. I can change anything that I see. I do not need to end here. I can take any path, any path that was or will be. I can die and walk into oblivion. I can rest.

Somewhere in the memory carried in my blood a knight walks into the darkness. He is bloody, his sword is broken, and he can barely stand. From

within the darkness he hears a deep reptilian roar. He hesitates. He thinks of turning, of the feeling of cool water cleaning the blood from his skin, of blessed sleep, and the happiness of seeing those he loves again. He walks on, into the dark, raising a broken sword.

I choose my path.

My mind's eye opens. The black branches of the forest thrash above me, and snow lies thick around me. The wind is a roar in my ears. I am dying. This is the last beat of my life, the last blade-stroke of a battle of souls. Somewhere my body lies broken and withering in fire. But here in the last blink of a dream I stand. The daemon is there, its feathers shimmering in the ghost light of the warp. Its eyes meet mine. We are bound together. It will be banished for thousands of years, but I have to die here. That is the price, a sacrifice as old as life.

I raise my broken blade and walk to meet it.

Titan – Augurium 0884313.M41

The three that doomed me gather in communion.

+It is done.+

+We will remember him.+

A pool of silence fills the communion. When the voices return they are one.

+He was our brother, and so we name him.+

All three minds echo the phrase. They begin the ritual thought pattern, rolling my memory between them until it is like a stone smoothed by the sea. They hold the thought until it is hard and clear, until it is ready to be remembered. A part of their thoughts that never sleeps adds my name to its murmured list. It is a list that has existed for ten thousand years. Portions of it are carved on stone, or etched into the metal of swords carried into the dark. But the whole list exists only in the minds of those who send us to die. There my name will live as they

live. In time they will pass the burden of remembrance to others, and those successors will take up the recitation of the fallen. It is their honour and penance.

+Istafel.+

+Istafel.+

+Istafel.+

Somewhere, beyond time and hope, I hear them.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOHN FRENCH is a writer and freelance games designer from Nottingham. His work for Black Library includes a number of short stories, the novellas *Fateweaver* and *The Crimson Fist* and the forthcoming novel *Ahriman: Exile*. He also works on the Warhammer 40,000 role playing games. When he is not thinking of ways that dark and corrupting beings can destroy reality and space, John enjoys making it so with his own Traitor Legions on the gaming table.



The Grey Knights are all that stands between mankind and the ravages of Chaos. Since their secretive beginnings during the Horus Heresy, these legendary Space Marine daemon hunters have journeyed into the dark realms of the warp – and beyond – in pursuit of their supernatural enemies.

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