



WARHAMMER
40,000

BINDING

RAY HARRISON



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Leonen Kyarus heard the crackling of flames and opened his eyes. The sky pressed down above him.

The sky.

Kyarus dragged himself upright and took in the devastation that surrounded him. The hull of the Rhino lay blasted open, twisted spars of metal reaching up like fingertips. Metal groaned as fires took hold, seals and joints snapping and popping in the heat. Ceramite emblems split and cracked like seared flesh.

Kyarus cursed softly and made to pull himself to his feet. He tried to shift his weight by leaning on his other hand and grimaced.

His hand had been shorn off at the wrist.

Looking at the stump of ragged flesh and bone, Kyarus cursed again.

He was surprised by how much it bothered him.

Brother?

Kyarus looked up. The voice was coming from somewhere outside the wrecked transport. It was barely more than a gargled hiss.

Brother? The voice repeated.

‘Yes?’ Kyarus shouted back. ‘Yes. I am alive. Who speaks?’

There was a pause before the disembodied voice spoke again.

Brother?

Kyarus heaved himself upright. His damaged armour squealed and whined as he moved, joints sparking. Thunder, loud enough to split the sky, pealed out as he hauled himself out of the mangled remains of the Rhino.

He stooped and picked up a warped metal stud that had been expelled from the stricken tank. It was still warm from the fires.

Kyarus murmured a brief benediction, closing his fist tight around the stud. The tank had served the Chapter longer than he had. He put the token into a

pouch at his belt.

Brother? The voice persisted. It seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere.

Kyarus drew his sword with the heavy scrape of metal on metal.

He tried to remember the minutes before the explosion. There had been others. Yet he awoke in the wreckage alone.

‘Where are you?’ Kyarus muttered, staring into the darkness.

For a moment, he felt uncertain. This made him angry.

Brother? The voice said again, like a whisper in his ear.

‘Marius? Damanios?’ Kyarus bellowed his brother’s names into the dark.

Silence.

The darkness slid closer. Kyarus could barely see the sky anymore.

He growled. ‘I am Brother-Sergeant Leonen Kyarus of the Imperial Fists. Show yourself.’

Nothing. The darkness kept its peace.

Kyarus cursed under his breath. He tasted iron.

For a few minutes he simply stood there, waiting, sword aloft. Connecting to his squad’s vox-channel, Kyarus clicked his way through frequencies. Hissing static answered him. Hissing static with an undercurrent of something else.

Singing.

Kyarus cut the link with a snarl and moved off further into the murk. The darkness had become so close that he quickly lost sight of the carcass of the Rhino, and even with his helm’s aid he had trouble maintaining a consistent heading.

After almost ten minutes he came across the skeleton of a building. It loomed out of the stygian gloom, empty windows staring. The doorway was an open maw, the jaws of a beast. Inside, its heart burned. The glow of a fire lit the archway and the stench carried on the wind. It smelled of cordite and promethium fumes. It smelled familiar.

As soon as he stepped beyond the threshold, he heard the voice again.

Brother?

It was even more ragged and hoarse than before, a rasping croak that carried between the building’s bones from somewhere above.

Inside, a spiral staircase led him upwards, around collapsed roof sections and beneath gaping wounds left by artillery. He left boot prints on the staircase, treading through something black and viscous.

The stairs terminated at a massive set of wooden doors. Unlike the rest of the

building, they remained intact, as if whatever had broken the building had avoided them deliberately.

The voice emanated from beyond.

The doors ground open as Kyarus put his full weight against them, forcing his way into the chamber beyond. The roof was missing, the supporting columns now ruined obelisks.

At the centre of the chamber, a dark pillar of red-veined stone beckoned.

Chained to the pillar was a body in battered yellow ceramite plate.

Damanios.

Kyarus cursed and moved closer.

‘Brother?’ He said. ‘Are you...’ His speech trailed off as he neared the pillar. He could see now.

Damanios was dead.

Rictus-stiff, with arms outstretched, Damanios’s jaw hung loose, showing a row of shattered teeth, yet still he spoke in a voice that was not his own.

The darkness receded like an ebbing tide and Kyarus truly *saw*.

Damanios was no more than a puppet.

Coiled around the pillar was an abomination. Its body was glossy and oil-slicked, coated with matted clumps of mouldering feathers. A long and ungainly neck supported a bulbous head with limpid eyes completely devoid of pupils. Flickering warp-light bled from the creature and into the pillar. The stone was not red-veined marble, as he had first thought, but depthless black, suffused with the creature’s essence.

‘It is bound here,’ Kyarus murmured, his voice heavy with comprehension.

At the foot of the pillar lay his missing brothers, broken and tossed aside. Sunken, dead eyes watched him, their skin stretched over their altered bones. They were shells, the life drained from them.

‘It needed them,’ Kyarus said. His breath fogged in the air. He snarled, realising why he had been drawn to this place.

‘Bastard!’ Kyarus bellowed up at the creature.

The creature’s grotesque, long-fingered claw clutched the top of Damanios’s head, digging into the scalp. Blood wreathed the dead Space Marine’s brow like a gory crown. As the claw moved, a rattling laugh issued from Damanios’s throat, though his jaw stayed slack and unmoving.

Brother? The tone of the voice was mocking.

‘You will pay, abomination,’ Kyarus snarled.

The thing wheezed and chattered its chitinous beak. It released its hold on the

corpse's head and slithered down the pillar, setting spread-toed feet on the floor of the chamber. It looked at him with the chasmal depths of its eyes.

You cannot hope to survive this, Leonen Kyarus of the Imperial Fists.

Kyarus nodded grimly. 'Perhaps.' He spat blood onto the ground. 'But survival was not what I had in mind.'

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RAY HARRISON is based in the East Midlands and works in digital publishing. After a hard day of ones and zeroes, Ray likes nothing more than escaping into the grim darkness of the far future. 'Binding' is Ray's first short story for Black Library.



As the renegade forces of the Warmaster storm across the galaxy, a very different kind of war rages in the shadows of the Imperium

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