



Suffer Not the Heretic

A Short Story by E J Henries

Chapter 1 – In His Wake

The city night danced with luminescent colours, an incandescent circus of midnight hues writhed in the sky above a burning landscape. A roaring creature of fire atop a huge brass steed charged headlong, its hoofs pounded the ground leaving a trail of scorched earth. In its wake followed three more of its burning brethren. Each warped humanoid atop their brass steed carried swords that writhed in fire.

+ Brothers, brace yourselves + Justicar Bainon's words resonated in the minds of the squad. + We must give the Inquisitor more time +

Aygar clutched his halberd all the tighter, he fired a salvo of shots from his wrist mounted Stormbolter. The sanctified bolter rounds struck their targets and as they did so, the reactive cores detonated. The rest of the strike squad opened fire.

Smoke and hellfire swirled around the still charging steeds, unharmed by the thunderous torrent of shots.

The Daemon leading the charge opened its fanged maw, a purple tongue whipped out to lick its canines. It turned to its lesser brethren and began spewing forth syllables that no mortal could utter. Dark flames whipped around the Daemons, each cursed word their leader uttered stoked the fire of their hate further and further.

“Bah'ra'ahash Nar'thay'arr'na'karr” it roared. Turning forward to look at the strike squad once more, it bellowed as the gap between them lessened to mere feet.

Aygar felt a mixture of revulsion and unbridled hate well up within him. The haft of his halberd crackled, as blue lightning ran up it to the point of the blade.

+ Now brothers, ignite your fury + Bainon's calm words echoed through the squad, they unified their minds. Bainon's Nemesis Daemon Hammer ignited first in coruscating blue lightning. Then Graia's Sword shone with a furious light. Each brother's weapon lit up with potent psychic energy. Lightning danced off the end of Aygar's blade scorching the ground. The air around Aygar began to mist, as frost spread from his ceramite clad boots along the broken rubble of the ground.

+ Control yourself + Bainon said.

The Juggernaught riding Daemons struck their lines, colossal beasts built of hellfire and brass smashed in to the squad. Graia leapt forward to defend Vazar, as his brother was slamming a fresh promethium canister in to the loading chamber of his Incinerator. The leader of the pack hacked and slashed with his flaming sword; each time Graia's blade found a way to parry him, he moved in a blurred figure of eight seeking an opening in his assailant's assault.

Aygar charged forward to assist him; sharp pain lanced through his side as one of the huge beast's jolted forward head first, knocking him from his feet. Aygar landed on his back and pushed with his feet to roll with the momentum. Halberd in one hand and the other on the ground he shot forward off the floor in to a sprint.

I have to cut this one down to help Graia.

Chopping forward with his halberd, the brass Juggernaught reared up on to its hind legs and crashed down forward. Aygar lanced upward using the point of his weapon as a spear, focussing his will into the tip of the weapon. The blade pierced the Juggernaught beneath its armoured maw. The beast's body trembled violently then toppled; its rider leapt from it, toward Graia.

+ Look out! + Aygar screamed in to his mind.

Still battling the largest of the pack, Graia turned as the dismounted daemon jumped upon him. It hacked with its sword while clinging to his armour. The pack leader urged its mount forward, trampling them both.

The line of brothers broke apart in to desperate fights; Graia lay on the floor, unmoving in cracked armour. The dismounted Daemon dissipating into smoke next to him. Vazar had his back to the wall of the Manufactorum, streams of sanctified promethium issuing from his Incinerator, keeping one of the pack from entering through the huge doors. Bainon moved to engage the rampaging leader; swinging his Nemesis Daemon Hammer while intoning litanies of faith, his words burned at the daemons flesh.

+ Aygar, Falkarn, take down the other rider. I will deal with their leader and then assist Vazar +

Falkarn reacted first, he surged forward engaging the Daemon and its mount.

+ But Vazar needs assistance, I must aid him + Aygar said.

+ Vazar is more than capable, now do as your Justicar commands + Bainon replied. His tone brokered no argument. Aygar ran to assist Falkarn who was already

fighting the mounted Daemon with his stave. Each blow rang true but even with the psychic will of the squad behind it, the Daemon kept fighting on. Its Hellblade flashed down in a brutal arc; catching Falkarn between pauldron and neck, he screamed out loud, as hellfire rippled through his torn neck muscles. Aygar ran in and parried the Daemon's blade away. Falkarn staggered back. The Juggernaut stomped forward, lowering its armoured head close to the ground. It charged at Aygar, swiftly raising its head as it collided in to him. The bladed helm smashed Aygar from his feet, sending him several feet in to the air. He plummeted to the ground, something in his leg snapped. Chemical injectors pumped fresh adrenal stimulants in to his system, dulling the pain. Falkarn, leaning on his stave fired a volley of bolter shells at the beasts flank. The rider screamed in its tainted language and pointed its fiery blade at Aygar but the Juggernaut beneath it turned to charge Falkarn.

+ Brother no! +

Falkarn staggered to one side but the bulk of the Daemonic steed hit him head on. The armour of his chest buckled and cracked. It sent him sailing backwards, Falkarn's limp form hit the ground and rolled to a stop near the unmoving form of Graia.

+ Inquisitor, whatever you are doing get on with it! + Aygar plunged his will through the thick rockcrete walls of the Manufactorium.

"Stay out of my head Astartes. It's difficult enough to concentrate as it is" the Inquisitor replied over the vox.

The mounted Daemon turned from Falkarn, its baleful eyes glowing with hate. Steam issued from the Juggernaut's maw, its hoofs began to pound the ground as it charged headlong toward Aygar. He focussed his will, levelling his halberd in to a defensive stance. The daemon atop its mount charged at him but mere feet away the rider let out a guttural scream. Its Juggernaut's front legs buckled and its armoured head ploughed in to the ground, sending the daemonic rider careening in to the air. Still screaming, its red skin burned bright, scorched and turned black as charcoal. It hit the ground and shattered in to ash. Aygar stared at the Juggernaut as it too broke down in front of him. It tried to rear up but its legs shattered beneath it. The colossal beast melted in to the ground. Aygar stared for a moment, then looked over to Bainon. The shine of his grey armour was streaked with scorch marks, bent and buckled in places. His chest plate rose and fell with heavy

breathing, gauntleted fingers held the smoking Daemon Hammer at his side. The dissipating corpses of the pack leader and the last Juggernaut lay in front of him. Vazar stood by him, white hot streams of promethium issued forth as he burned the remains of the Daemons.

“We were fortunate, there was little tethering this pack to the realm of man. Tend to your brothers. I shall see if the Inquisitor’s interrogation has been successful” Bainon said.

One of the large Manufactorium doors creaked open on old hinges. Interrogator Calvariam stood at its threshold, the sleeves of his long coat rolled up to reveal bloodied hands.

“I can answer that one for you. Our acquisition sang like a bird” his skull mask seemed to sneer in the light; “it just took a bit of persuasion” he shrugged. Blood still dripped from his fingers. He lent down and wiped them on a patch of dried grass.

“Then we know who is behind this?” it was Vazar that spoke, as he administered care to their wounded brothers.

“As we suspected, a rogue psyker has been plying his trade. Some idiotic gang hired him to take out a rival. It seems the psyker is now being worshipped by the Galfrane mining crew, Emperor knows why, they’re a few clicks north of here. The Inquisitor wants to move on their position straight away.”

Bainon looked at Vazar.

“Their wounds are grievous, but I believe they will both survive” Vazar said.

“Have Mithris bring the Stormraven in to extract our wounded brothers. Calvariam, we can have him fly us to the Galfrane mine.” Bainon said.

“No need” as Calvariam spoke a Chimera tank, the ubiquitous armoured transport of the Imperial Guard bedecked in the iconography of the Inquisitor, trundled in to view. “Garrick and the others have been called in, care to join?” Local militia had at some point appeared to quell the blazing habitat nearby. The flames spluttered casting a grim shadow over Calvariam’s skull mask.

“Let us take the fight to our enemy then.” Bainon looked to the Chimera. “The Emperor’s work is to be done.” he said.

Aygar looked up as their Stormraven soared in to view. They would see their wounded brothers on board and then this rogue psyker and his twisted cult would pay for their heresy. He looked over at the militia and wondered what would

become of the innocent survivors that had witnessed the taint of Chaos. The Inquisitor did not seem like a man to tolerate loose ends.

Chapter 2 – Onwards and Upwards

The Chimera rumbled forwards on tracks that chewed the ground to mulch beneath its mighty treads. To the south the flames that had threatened the Manufactorium and habitats of the locals were being extinguished. Further North loomed rocky outcrops that lined the steep climb to the Galfrane mine.

Kaskar sat in the transport compartment of the Chimera; a ubiquitous tank requisitioned by the Inquisitor many years ago. He inspected his sword again, one dark leather glove rested on his lap. He pressed his naked thumb, criss-crossed with tiny scars, against the edge of the blade, drawing blood from the contact. Even deactivated his power sword had an astonishingly keen blade. Pleased, he sheathed it and pulled the glove back on. His shield rested beneath his seat, too bulky to check in the cramped confines of the armoured transport. He looked up, the three Grey Knights that had joined them stood awkwardly in the centre of the transport. Bainon the leader of their squad had his arms crossed about him. Kaskar felt they were communicating but his helm displayed no local vox frequencies as being open. In the corner, nearest the driver up front, Mechrias checked on power couplings and port connection inductors of Tren-Mk IX. It sat unmoving, as Mechrias calibrated this and that; its blank helm impassive, long coiled arms hanging loosely by its side. Tren served as a grim reminder that there were worse fates than death for those that committed heresy.

Vayla, wife of Mechrias, sat with her ‘children’ they clung to her with clawed limbs. The cherubic qualities of her offspring made sinister by their metal encased skulls and protruding artificial bat like wings. The children had died soon after birth. Unaccepting of this fact, Vayla had pleaded with her husband to save them. So he had, in a fashion.

Inquisitor Arkhin sat opposite Kaskar, stone faced and eyes shut. By his side Calvariam fidgeted with the cuff of his long coat, dried blood refusing to be removed by the friction of his thumb and forefinger.

“Not gonna happen” Rufus said, sideways glancing at Calvariam from where he sat.

“Pardon?” Calvariam replied, still idly brushing at his cuff.

“Your coat. It soaked right in, dried up and now you’re gonna hafta replace it. So do us all a favour. Sit back and be still.” Rufus said.

Calvariam cocked his skull faced mask toward Rufus but then, as if thinking better of it, sat back and kept silent. The unease between the interrogator and Mechrias’ lackey had only gotten worse with time. Kaskar looked over to Garrick, the ex-Arbite had an odd expression, his jaw tight like he too wanted to say something but would not. Perhaps, Kaskar thought, the lack of respect in the chain of command grated on the former officer. It was known that Garrick wished to leave Arkhin’s retinue. He’d learned of some opportunity on Drem, a backwater fringe world in need of order. If he left, Kaskar would miss the straight talking officer.

The transport rocked to one side for a moment before levelling off once more.

“Apologies, damn road is getting more savage the higher we go. Not long now. Received that data packet you wanted Inquisitor. Making it available to you all now” Trask said from the driver’s seat. He was a decent man but Kaskar wondered why Arkhin kept him around, as far as he could tell Trask had the ability to be distinctly average at anything he put his hand to. Gwynne, his gunner sat next to him, she was a different matter entirely. Kaskar had seen her in action; the woman’s ability to hit a target was near uncanny. Mechrias had offered her ‘enhancements’, like Rufus’, to which she had replied “lay one ‘o’ them delicate metal fingers on me and aye’ll snap it roight off, now geth on wit ya.” The techpriest had blurted some binary to which Vayla had chuckled, then let the matter be.

Arkhin raised his dataslate and beckoned for the others to do the same. Kaskar looked at his and began viewing the Galfrane mine in more detail.

“The mine contains, or used to, contain rich deposits of an adamantine alloy. Reserves this last decade have been dwindling. The situation made worse by the Gawldor mine to the West. They hit a sweet spot of the same alloy and have been steadily expanding their operation. There are three main tunnels in the Galfrane mine, so we’ll split in to three teams of four.” Arkhin paused and turned to Bainon.

“I would like one Astartes to accompany each team?”

Bainon’s helm turned to Arkhin “We function better together” he said.

“I understand that but there’s a pragmatic reason, the comms.”

“You expect the vox to be unusable” Bainon said. “Very well, my brothers will accompany each team and remain in telepathic contact.”

“Excellent, my thanks Justicar. The teams are as follows: I will lead Bainon, Vayla and Rufus down the newest tunnel. Calvariam, you will lead Kaskar, Garrick and Aygar down the central tunnel. Finally Mechrias, I want you with Tren, Syrene and Falkarn. Stay in contact, extricate the rogue Psyker alive for interrogation and eliminate all hostiles.” Arkhin raised his voice “Trask, you’re to maintain a vigil over the mine entrance. Gwynne, if it moves and it is not us coming out of that mine...”

She cut him off “Oi get tha’ picture.” Kaskar swore he heard a smile in her tone. There was little more to say, the rest of the journey was spent checking weapons and in silent contemplation.

Chapter 3 – Down Below

They entered the mine just before dawn; it took an hour walking together until the first tunnel broke away; Arkhin ploughed forward down it with his team. A further hour or so passed before Mechrias' team split down the oldest tunnel. This left Kaskar with Calvariam, Garrick and brother Aygar of the Grey Knights. The mine had been akin to a grave. There had been no guards, nor workers. No foreman to greet them. The mine was listed as active, yet it seemed abandoned. Kaskar was certain this was not so, there were still a number of personnel transit vehicles parked near the main entrance and the data records had showed that no workers had been collected that evening after shift close.

They walked in silence, the cavernous walls forced them to spread out in to a line, to make sure no individuals snuck past or tried to flank them. Aygar strode ahead by a few feet in the centre of their group, with Calvariam following close behind. Occasionally the Interrogator would spot a cogitation terminal; he would have the group stop, as he used his abilities to check entries and recent usage. Thus far he had said nothing had been entered in to any of the terminals.

They carried on pausing every now and then to inspect the mined dead end offshoots attached to the tunnel, checking for potential ambushes. It had been slow going and the dark grey tunnel stretched several kilometres forward and back.

“Justicar Bainon and brother Falkarn report no contact with the enemy as yet Interrogator.” Aygar said; his halberd resting at ease against his shoulder pauldron as he strode on.

“Good to know they're having as dull a time as we are” Calvariam chimed.

Kaskar looked over to the Interrogator, his helm concealing the quizzical expression on his stern features. He shifted the weight of his shield, his powered carapace hummed as he did so.

“You realise Interrogator that the enemy is...” Aygar began, but Calvariam cut him off. “Yes I understand well enough. The enemy's numbers are either dead, sacrificed or more likely, lying in wait for us.”

A noise up ahead brought quiet upon them. Aygar raised a gauntleted hand and closed it in to a fist. They all stopped following his unspoken command. Kaskar tapped his helm, increasing the inbuilt noise sensors receptiveness. He closed his eyes listening intently. It was unmistakable now, the slow shuffling of movement ahead of them. He dimmed the sensors back down and activated the closed vox between them.

“Multiple targets inbound” he said.

“Numbers?” Garrick replied; his voice deliberately quiet, as he wore only a half helm as fitting of an Arbitrator, even a former one.

“Not sure” Kaskar said. He looked to the Astartes “Aygar?”

+ Dozens, I will take the lead and engage the centre. Garrick, find cover to my right and engage at range. Kaskar, keep my left covered.

The chamber is far wider here, they will seek to flank us. Calvariam, you will be the last line, let none escape + The thought pulsed through their minds far faster than spoken words could.

They drew their weapons and took position. Aygar raised his wrist mounted Stormbolter and began firing volleys of explosive rounds at the oncoming miners. The shells detonated in blooms of light, illuminating the chamber far better than the wall mounted lumin globes. Each flash depicted the miners charging forwards with improvised weapons held high, closer and closer in jarred bursts of light, like a stop motion pict from old Terra.

Kaskar took his position several feet to the left of Aygar and drew his power blade. The sword slipped from its sheath and he thumbed the activation rune, the energised blade crackled to life with coruscating energy. He stood his ground and felt a wash of heat roll through the chamber from his far right. He risked a glance and saw Garrick pop up from behind his improvised cover, behind some disused mining equipment, to fire another blast from his Meltagun. The burning stream of intense heat doused across three miners, their flesh shimmered and burned; while the cloth of their attire ignited in flame. The two nearest to Garrick dropped like stones, likely dead before they hit the ground. The third screamed as he fell, rolling to try and extinguish the fire consuming him.

Kaskar’s attention was drawn forwards. Two miners had found their way past Aygar who was beset by several of their number. The first man stocky and broad with flak inlaid clothing sprinted forward and swung for Kaskar’s head with a

crude pick axe. Kaskar swung his shield arm out in a horizontal motion, pushing the blow aside. A quick thrust of his blade punctured the man's neck. The second miner was upon him without a moment to spare. Kaskar stepped back, narrowly missing a thunderous swing from a large hammer. He slashed his blade across the miner's throat. The man's weapon was hopelessly far from any attempt to parry thanks to his haphazard attack. Broad and muscular, fighting like zealots yet entirely untrained. Three more assailants had slipped by Aygar, who Kaskar noted was now covered in gore. A quick glance showed that Garrick was also dealing with flanking miners.

Kaskar darted forwards then sidestepped a blow to his right. A swipe of his blade sent a hand flying, severed from its shocked owner. He smashed the man aside with his shield, hunkered down low and burst forwards, ramming the next man. As he collided with the miner Kaskar pushed upwards, servos within his powered carapace whined and he heaved the man over his head. He heard a crunch behind him but kept moving forward to catch the third miner off guard. He batted aside a clumsy swing of a wrench with his shield and punctured his blade through the man's eye, the socket made a sick cracking sound, as the blade pushed through further severing grey matter. Kaskar yanked the blade free. Turning swiftly he ran forward and kicked a sturdy boot into the downed man's head, a snapping sound followed, the miner lay still, his neck broken. Kaskar spun back around to face yet more of the miners, Aygar had been right, there were dozens and they surged forwards with glazed eyes. He took the fight to them and charged forwards, hacking and slashing with his sword while knocking blows aside with his shield. He was almost by Aygar's side when a crimson beam of light burst forwards from the darkness. Kaskar caught a glimpse of a man hefting a heavy mining laser, before an explosive round from Aygar blew the man away. Staggering back a few steps, Kaskar looked down at his ruined abdomen; it smoked from large hole that had punched through him. He coughed violently, smelling the charred meat of his own flesh within his closed helm. A blow sailed to his left, thudding against the shield in his weakening grip. Another man pushed forwards with a pneumatic hammer, he caught Kaskar with a powerful glancing blow, pushing him back and making his head reel with dizziness. His arm shuddered, grip failed and Storm Shield flew from his armoured fist. Hacking up blood, he tore the stifling helm off with his now free hand and threw it with all his strength at his assailant. It caught

the man square on the nose, his pneumatic weapon lowered for a moment and Kaskar staggered forward. His blade swept in a deadly arc, tearing through the man's mining gear. Kaskar choked on more blood and spat a goblet of viscera on to the floor; it steamed on the cool ground. Instinct took over; he hacked and slashed at any who neared. He parried blows and countered with a killer's precision. While one hand impotently clutched his ruined midriff, the other wielded his power sword in a grip of iron. His vision blurring, the last of his assailants fell to the floor with a wet smack. A pool of crimson spread from the closest miner's ruined skull, half his cranium open to the dank stench of human sweat and blood now filling the chamber.

Kaskar swung his head from left to right. Bodies lay all around him, severed limbs and the smell of charred flesh; some of which he grimaced, his own. He forced his weary eyes up and saw Aygar still fighting, his bolter arm hanging limp by his side, but he fought ever harder using his halberd one handed.

Kaskar turned his tired gaze to Garrick, the former Arbite was surrounded and being forced back against the far chamber wall. Calvariam unable to reach him, the Interrogator was busy fending off two attackers of his own. Kaskar lurched forwards on unsteady legs, swaying from side to side. Dried blood stained the corners of his lips and the stench of his own burning flesh threatened to drown him. He pushed forwards and ran the first of Garrick's attackers through from behind; his blade punctured the man's chest, rupturing his heart. The miner fell forwards dragging Kaskar with him, he managed to keep on his feet and placed a boot on the dead miner's back and pulled his sword free. Pain lanced through his shoulder, as a pick axe embedded itself in to him from a heavy swing. A guttural noise escaped him from the pain, as the miner tried pulling his weapon free but it was caught on the powered carapace armour. Kaskar looked the man in the eyes, his dark red lips smiled; one eye closed from bone wearying exhaustion and rammed his sword through the man's stomach at a near vertical angle eviscerating multiple organs. The blade protruded from the back of the miner's neck. Kaskar watched as the light faded from his eyes and felt an overwhelming wave of melancholy, not long now. He did not bother to try removing the sword from the miner. Instead he staggered back and with his good arm ripped the pick axe free, holding it by the shaft near the base of the crude weapon he lurched forward once more and swung it with such force at the last standing attacker. The man turned to

face Kaskar just as the pick axe smashed through his neck, near taking his head off. Garrick was rolling on the floor and finally got the better of his broad shouldered assailant, the last of the nearby miners. His shock maul rose and fell like the beating of a drum until the miner beneath him convulsed no more. Garrick turned to Kaskar; he saw the crusader collapse to his knees.

“Throne” Garrick said.

Kaskar figured he must look quite the mess. It took all his energy to keep himself from falling forwards.

“Kaskar?” Garrick asked.

He opened such tired eyes, he had not realised they had been closed. Calvariam limped into view. Kaskar’s head lolled to look toward Aygar, who was dispatching the last of the miners within the chamber. His head rocked forward and he coughed charred blood.

“You fought well Crusader” Garrick said. Kaskar managed to raise his gaze one last time. The normally stern features of the former Arbite were lined with pain. In his hands he held Kaskar’s now quiet blade. He leaned down on one knee and placed it across the Crusader’s lap. Taking his hands in his he placed them on the sword.

“Only in death does duty end” Garrick said.

“So... it... does” Kaskar managed, his duty now done.

+ Justicar Bainon needs us; their group has engaged the heretic Psyker + Aygar said, before making his way back the way they had come through the tunnel. Calvariam placed a hand on Garrick’s shoulder “Come on, there’s justice to be done” he said.

Garrick raised himself up, holstered his weapons and brushed down his long coat. “Damn right there is” he said. He looked once more at the serene countenance of their ruined comrade; still slumped in a kneeling position, as if in prayer. Garrick rubbed a dirty fist beneath one eye and turned to follow Aygar.

Chapter 4 – His Will

“I want him alive” Arkhin screamed. His power sword flashed in a lightning arc decapitating a heretic miner in his way. He whipped his naval pistol from its holster and fired three shots at a charging Daemon. Its red body heaved and distorted at the impacts, then reformed in to a charging humanoid form. Arkhin readied himself but the Daemon blew apart in a furious detonation. Justicar Bainon’s power armoured arm outstretched, smoke issuing from the barrel of his wrist mounted Stormbolter. “We may not have a choice Inquisitor” he said. The chamber was a carnal house of intense fighting, it echoed with gunfire and the clatter of close quarter weaponry. Bainon charged back in to the fray; wielding his powerful Nemesis Daemon Hammer, while incanting litanies of faith. The heretic Psyker stood by a makeshift dais at the back of the chamber, he slit the throat of a woman dressed in civilian rags and spewed yet more tainted words forth, while throwing the dying body of the woman aside on to a pile of fresh corpses.

At Arkhin’s side stood Rufus. The Inquisitorial acolyte, who bore much of Mechrias’ handiwork, leaned in to his Plasma Gun. His augmetic magnifiers shifted, as he aimed at the unsanctioned Psyker “Screw this!” he yelled. “No” Arkhin pushed the gun to one side, the violent ball of blue energy careened in to a pack of charging crimson Daemons, taller than men with back jointed legs. The sphere of light exploded in their midst, washing over them, ripping apart their newly formed bodies. Heat vented from Rufus’ volatile weapon, searing the tattered flak armour of his forearm.

“Damn it, he’s our only lead. Now do as I command!” Arkhin said and stalked back in to the fray, being sure to keep a distance from the whirling coils that were Tren Mk IX’s arms. The Arco Flagellant had charged in to the fray of Daemon’s and heretics alike; a tornado of lashing coils, its arms whipped from enhanced musculature and slewed flesh from bone, heads from shoulders and armour apart with reckless abandon. Arkhin had uttered the activation words upon entering the

cavernous chamber filled with the press of sickening heretics. Virulent neuro-adrenal stimulants had pumped in to the cybernetically enhanced body of the penitent heretic; unleashing him upon the miners who had sworn their souls away to the ruinous powers.

Arkhin chopped his sword in wild hacks at a Daemon to his right; it wailed and screamed, as the blade cleaved it in two. “By His divine will we fight, suffer not the heretic” he yelled, charging a miner holding a serrated blade.

More bolts fired from Bainon, the explosive rounds impacted near the dais, detonating violently. The Psyker screamed and ducked down as shrapnel ricocheted past him.

“I said..” Arkhin was cut off as the man he was fighting barrelled in to him. They fell to the floor a tangle of limbs. A forearm slammed in to his jaw, blurring his view. He tried rolling but the miner’s full weight was on him now. The serrated blade of his assailant descended. Arkhin let go of his sword and barely caught his attacker’s forearm in time, as the assailant’s blade began to dig in to his chest sawing at his heavy flak armour.

Nearby Tren charged past, oblivious to his master’s danger, weeping blood and oil from a multitude of wounds. A feral Daemon with a mane of smoking black hair hacked at Tren with a sword enveloped in hellfire.

Arkhin tried to scream for aid, as the miner atop him pushed the blade further in to his chest.

“Argh arghhh” the serrated blade chewed through muscle and sinew, weakening his already tenuous grip.

“We are His hammer!” Bainon let out a thunderous roar in the distance. Arkhin felt a surge of strength, tired limbs invigorated by psychic renewal. He forced his attacker from him and rose to capitalise on the moment.

Rufus fired another ball of ocean like fire from his Plasma Gun; the stock recoiled in to his aching shoulder. The gun hissed as cooling vents blasted hot air out, the skin of his arm blistered, the flak armour on his forearm now burned away. The pain was worth it, another pack of freshly emerging Daemons blew apart in a wave of fiery blue plasma. His attention turned as he heard a scream several feet away. Arkhin wrestled with a man atop him; fighting to stop his attacker from pushing a blade down through his chest.

Rufus flicked up the reflex sight, knelt on one knee and breathed in. The laser dot cantered on the miner's head. Time seemed to slow and Rufus felt an invigorating rush bring life to tired limbs. His sight seemed to sharpen and he heard a roar from somewhere. He squeezed the trigger and released a shot that sailed towards the attacker; his eyes widened as Arkhin heaved the miner off himself and rose. The blast struck him across the shoulder, incinerating armour from flesh and flesh from bone. Deep blue plasma washed across the Inquisitor's body, lapping up his neck and consuming his head in searing white heat. Rufus' jaw hung slack, as he watched the Inquisitor slump to the ground, smouldering.

Calvaraim turned the corner and almost ran in to the back of Aygar. The tunnel had become labyrinthine and far thinner than before, the walls laden with support beams. Managing to stop, Cal gulped in a lung full of air and gagged on the smell of blood and the metallic tang of ozone. He tried to ask Aygar what was going on but the Astartes had raised an unsteady arm, and was firing his wrist mounted Stormbolter, oblivious to the Interrogator's call.

"By the Throne!" Garrick said, as he turned the corner to stand by Cal. His chest rose up and down from exertion of their mad dash to aid the Inquisitor in apprehending the rogue Psyker.

They both looked upon the carnage. The tunnel opened up into a huge chamber lit by luminous globes, candles and mining flood lights. It spanned hundreds of feet lengthways across and up. It appeared to be a natural hollow in the deep crust of the planet and the chamber walls were lined with reinforced beams. The ceiling dripped like rainfall; accept each droplet crawled slowly down one of the many stalactites hanging above, before descending to the carnage below. The hard grey of the floor was drenched in blood; bodies of miners lay scattered throughout the chamber. Dark coruscating spheres of purple and black pulsated with a sickly presence at the farthest point of the chamber. In between them, behind some form of dais, a solitary figure levitated above the ground with arms outstretched. From the spheres of broken reality clawed hands appeared, talons grabbed at invisible holds and heaved through bodies of crimson; more smoking red forms to join those that already shifted and fought throughout the chamber.

Cal noticed Justicar Bainon first, near the far end of the chamber, the Astartes was pushing forwards but still several feet away from the Psyker; swinging his

hammer, blood seeped from his cracked armour. Tren Mk IX lay twitching nearby, an arm sheared from its body slick with blood and oil.

“Cal?” Garrick pointed and Cal let his gaze follow it to its conclusion. Inquisitor Arkhin lay smouldering on the floor several feet away. While Rufus fended off a human attacker near the fallen Inquisitor.

“Bring him to me!” the Psyker’s shrill tone reached the chamber entrance where Calvariam and Garrick stood, transfixed by the horror of it all. Cal saw two of the last surviving humans make toward the Inquisitor. Aygar and Bainon were occupied fighting the Daemon’s that had torn their way through unreality in to the chamber.

“Come on” Garrick said. Cal wanted to move, he really did. A firm hand slammed on his shoulder, Garrick’s helmed forehead pressed against Cal’s skull shaped faceplate. “Now is not the time, come on Interrogator.”

They ran forward together, feet splashing through pools of viscera. Garrick broke in to a sprint as Rufus took a hard blow to the jaw, dropping his combat blade. His attacker lunged and Rufus kicked out pushing him back. Garrick hurled himself forward and tackled Rufus’ assailant to the ground. Drawing his Shock Maul, the Arbite swung and clubbed the miner’s face. The man spat blood and teeth; Garrick continued to beat him until the man ceased spasming.

Cal reached Rufus and took his charred forearm by the hand and pulled him up. He spotted a miner charging toward them. Cal leaned back and heaved Rufus toward the exit, just as the miner swung for him. The axe sailed past the nape of Rufus’ neck slicing the pale surface flesh. Cal let go of Rufus and slid his rapier sword free of its cane sheath and leapt in to attack.

Nearby Garrick barrelled in to the other charging attacker with far less grace but undeniable results. The Arbite and miner tumbled to the floor. Garrick atop him, he grabbed the man’s head and slammed it repeatedly in to the hard ground until blood pooled from the miner’s caved skull.

Cal’s assailant staggered and fell to the floor, bleeding from a multitude of punctures. The Interrogator breathed heavily and turned, more Daemons had flooded through in to the chamber. The two tears in reality, the pulsating spheres of immaterium growing in size. The power armoured forms of the Justicar and Aygar were being overwhelmed by several Daemon’s, unable to engage the Psyker.

Cal stared at the levitating heretic, took a deep breath and removed his skull faceplate. His eyes narrowed, as the air around him shuddered and cooled. He'd only ever used his power in controlled conditions, to extract information, but now he focussed his will to a blade's point and plunged it at the Psyker. The heretic's head turned sharply, his gaze locked on to Calvariam's, cruel lips twisted in to a smile. Cal rocked back, as if a fist had struck him square in the temple. Garrick steadied him. Cal wiped the back of his hand to his nose and saw fresh blood staining his sleeve. Cal's temple pounded furiously and he forced his gaze upon the Psyker. He sought what strength he had; willing to find untapped reserves but the wellspring of his power was a dried husk. His head tipped back at a violent psychic onslaught and he screamed, his eyes streaming with blood. Hands to his temples Cal fell to the floor, with all he had left his mind lashed out at the Psyker, all control lost. His will no longer a fine point, he sought only to flay and rip at the abomination's mental defences but the heretic was too strong, far too strong. Blackness engulfed him, he fell in to the arms of Garrick, tears of blood streaming down his worn out features.

Chapter 5 – A Knight's Tale

Aygar's halberd rose and fell; he swept it through the Daemon's ranks and chopped at limbs. Justicar Bainon still fought by his side but his powerful blows had become erratic and slow; his armour was breached and blood now poured from wounds that refused to close. The hellfire wrought blades wielded by the crimson Daemons split armour and skin alike, yet the malefic burning wounds would not congeal.

+ Brother + Aygar felt Bainon's presence + Brother, even we cannot stem a tide as this + the Justicar's mind wearily pulsed the message to Aygar.

+ Falkarn? The others of the Inquisitor's retinue + Aygar was so focussed on the fighting he could not muster the will to seek out his brother Astartes.

+ Too far out, we must find a way to end this. I wasted too much time trying to adhere to the fallen Inquisitor's wishes + Aygar agreed with the thought Bainon sent to him.

+ I concur. Let us end this. I have an idea + Aygar surged forwards with renewed vigour; his armour pumped fresh stimulants in to his gene enhanced body. The Nemesis Force Halberd he wielded arced left to right in reinvigorated arms. They bore the Emperor's gift, they fought His enemies and did so by His will made manifest. Bainon beside him struck each enemy with more conviction. Aygar had heard Bainon tell the Inquisitor, the Astartes of the 666th Chapter knew how they fought best and it was as brother's united in purpose. Bainon began to chant the litany of banishment and Aygar joined him, the chorus of their voices echoed throughout the chamber. The clambering talons of fresh Daemon's tearing through the spheres of darkness screamed out, while the malefic entities manifested in the chamber reacted like enraged beasts; they let out primal screams and charged at the steel coloured Astartes. The heretic Psyker levitated higher off the ground and closed his eyes in furrowed concentration. Arms extended out toward each dark sphere, hands open; while his jaw worked fiercely to utter blasphemous words of power. The tears in reality began to expand further.

Aygar took the moment, with the intent to throttle the life from it. He swept his halberd in a horizontal arc and switched his grip to one hand. Gauntleted fingers grabbed at a skull inscribed cylinder at his belt, with a flick of his thumb he primed it and threw the device savagely toward the Psyker. The heretic's eyes opened and a maniacal grin creased in to dark lines of his milky white face. The grenade halted in mid-air, caught in a hand of spectral darkness. The Psyker's hollow eyes widened, as the grenade glowed white hot, its inlaid inscriptions resonated with the crescendo of the Astartes litanies. Golden light flooded the chamber, as the grenade detonated in a vortex of energy; the spectral hand was pulled in to the vortex and with it the invisible link between it and the Psyker. The heretic was ensnared, his life force being ripped from him, his wide eyes smoked and veins stood out. The heretic opened the cracked lips of his mouth to scream but no sound escaped. He began to convulse and froth flecked his lips. The heat and stench of the room seemed to draw inward towards the heretic, he became the vortex of imploding psychic energy was torn from him. The Daemons around him roared and fled back to the closing spheres of unreality; desperately clawing to get back in to the immaterium, as their bodies burned and blackened. The swirling miasma grew stronger and the Psyker charred from the inside out. The remaining Daemon's forms broke apart and shattered, shards of malefic energy dissipating in to violet smoke.

Aygar was on one knee, closest to the burned out Psyker. He felt drained, mind and body but he raised his helm and stood with deliberate slowness.

"It is done" he said. The charred body of the heretic dropped to the floor in a crumpled heap of tattered robes. The remains of the Daemons drifted upwards in tendrils of smoke and the tears in reality closed in on themselves with a silent finality.

Chapter 6 – Thy Will is Done

It took a great deal of effort for Calvariam to pry his eyes open. He tried to raise a hand to shield himself from the stark brightness of the room but found his arm restrained.

“Well hello” a warm voice greeted him.

“He... erhh ar erghhk” he choked on his own greeting and squinted at where he thought the voice had come from.

“Shh now, it’s alright. Take it slow Cal” the voice continued like honey. He felt a cool shade drape across his eyes and sighed with the relief. He managed to pry his eyes open bit by bit, his surroundings shifted in to focus. A delicate hand hung above him, sunlight giving it a halo like aspect. The room was a dull white made bright by an open window with dazzling morning sunshine beaming through.

“Wh... where?” he managed; looking upon the sleek figure that stood by his bed.

“We’re in the Governor’s retreat. After the incident at the mine, you and the others were brought here to recuperate in privacy. The Governor was most forthcoming after Garrick spoke to him” she said.

“What happened?”

“Cal, we can talk later. You’ve been through a great deal and you’re as pale as the grave” she said.

“Please Syrene?” his voice sounded pitifully weak. He felt nauseous and looked at the tubes attached to his body.

She sighed and her eyes softened. It was odd to see those crystal blue eyes, so often Syrene wore the sharp features of her death mask, as many of her cult did. Instead now, he looked upon the woman beneath the mask and he realised he too was without his own. She shifted forward and sat on the side of his bed, her free hand brushed some of his ash blonde hair away from his face.

“We recovered Kaskar’s body; he’ll be buried on this planet, a plaque to honour him in the Governor family grounds. An honour, I’m told” her gaze left Cal’s and dropped for a moment. She got up and walked over to the window, the bright

sunlight washed back over him and his sore eyes snapped shut. He heard a swoosh and the room dimmed, he opened his eyes; the curtains now closed. She returned by his side and sat by him, an idle hand rested on his chest.

“The penitent Tren is dead as well. No plaque for him” she said.

Calvariam waited.

“Garrick left. It’s been ten days, you see. He organised all this” she looked around the room at the various medical cogitators and life supporting machines. “He kept the group together when we needed it most.” She looked at him now and her eyes drew tight. “He’s not dead, Arkhin that is, not Garrick. Emperor knows how but the Inquisitor hung on to life. He’s a ruin though; Mechrias is confident he can save him but what he’ll be saving I don’t know. Anyway, the Astartes stayed out of sight, but they had to ensure that the taint was contained at the Galfrane Mine. Garrick led a bit of a hunt in the local area, backed up by the others to make sure that the issue was at an end. They visited you, you know, the Astartes. They stared in to your soul” she patted his chest. “Looks like you got lucky as they left too” she smiled. “Anyway, Garrick dealt with the loose ends. Apologised. Then left with the first Rogue trader that would have him. He took the Arbitrator role in Drem. Now it’s just you, me, what’s left of Arkhin, Mechrias and Vayla; who are ‘fixing him’, and a rather dejected Rufus. It was him, you see. I found out from Bainon that he shot Arkhin by accident; couldn’t believe it.” She shook her head.

“The Psyker?” Cal managed his throat sore and rasping.

“Why do you think Garrick left? The Psyker is dead; soul ripped from this world by all accounts and with him gone so is our last lead. We knew that the Galfrane mining company hired him, and with the help of this world’s administratum officials, that the Psyker was from off world; we ran the name you got from your interrogation, Halber Tyvus. Trouble is, since he’s from off world and the data records of the mine were wiped we have no way of knowing from where, why or how he got here. Inquisitor Arkhin out of action means so is our link to the vast resources of the Inquisition. If the Inquisitor survives and if he regains consciousness, we might have a chance to dig up more intel. Until then we are well and truly dead in the void.” She finished. Idly tracing patterns with one finger across the sheet covering his chest.

“I see” he said. “Unrelated note, just why am I bound to this bed?”

“Well” she said, looking up with a steely gaze. “Bainon told us that you were free from taint but..” and her eyes wandered to the bedside table. Resting on top lay a glass of water, a tattered book and an exquisite yet all too sharp looking blade.

“Never can be too careful” she turned back to him and smiled her pearly whites, her finger tracing tighter and tighter concentric circles above his chest, about where his heart would be.

“Yes, quite” he replied, “so we’re here for the duration then. Until we can resume this case?” he continued.

“Yes, I suppose” she hopped from her perch on his bed, walked around to the bedside table and hovered a hand above it. She snatched up the book and Cal let out a breath he had not realised he had held. Syrene planted herself in a nearby chair and put her graceful legs up to rest on his bed, she thumbed the book open and her eyes began scanning the page. “Fancy a story?” she asked. Cal looked at her, somewhat dumbfounded by the absurdity of his situation. “Sure, why not” he said and found the corner of his lip turn up in the slightest of smiles. Nothing else for it really; resting his head back on the warm pillow, as light from a setting sun glinted through the fluttering curtain. Syrene began to read to him in soft caramel tones. There was nothing for it but to wait for now, to recover and to resume the hunt.

I will suffer not the heretic but I will cause him much suffering.

End