

# Hero's Requiem

*"People say, I must've meant much to my grand-father, very much indeed. I meant so much to him, that he gave his life for me. So people say, at least. Oh, dear God-Emperor, I wish it was true..."*

**--Commissar Sebastian Yarrick.**

Rolf Yarrick burst through the door of his son Frederick's home and into the first room. There he also saw the origins of the gunshot and where it had gone. On the ground, just a few metres from the door, he saw Frederick curled up against the wall. The large red stain on his shirt front was all too telling for Rolf. Frederick seemed to notice who was there and looked up at his father. There was no sadness in the young commissar's eyes, just an endless fury and Rolf understood who must be responsible.

"They're in the next room, father. They've got Cecil. You have to stop them," Frederick gasped forth. Yarrick knelt down next to his son and took a closer look at the wound.

"I can't leave you like this," Yarrick said and made to apply pressure to the wound. It was bad but there was still a chance.

Frederick's hand stopped him and put a laspistol in it instead. The clip was almost spent.

"End me, father, like you ended James. Don't give these Chaos scum the satisfaction of having killed an Imperial Commissar. Please, father."

Rolf reluctantly gripped the laspistol handle. It was James' death all over again, but with one important difference: This time, he was prepared for it, emotionally. Rolf Yarrick was prepared for the feelings that would come afterwards. He had learned his lesson. Yet still it bore against some fundamental part of him to do this. If he did, he would effectively kill another part of his soul, he knew it.

Frederick coughed bloody phlegm, pulling Yarrick back to reality. That had set Yarrick's mind. He aimed the pistol at Frederick's head. One shot was left in the clip. More than enough.

"Rest easy, my son," Yarrick prayed and pulled the trigger.

Frederick Yarrick, Imperial Commissar, slumped to the side, dead.

Rolf Yarrick rose slowly after putting down the laspistol next to his dead son. He turned and walked into the next room, feeling strangely empty.

The emptiness he felt after killing his own son was nothing compared to the rush of red hot rage that went through his body as he saw what was going on in the living room.

The cultists, six of them, were clearly all of them Slaaneshii worshippers. Dressed in garish colours, none of the colours going well with another and some blatantly refusing to speak to each other, with long, draping straps of studded black leather dangling from various parts of the clothing and their bodies, not to mention the innumerable piercings and tattoos. But what sent Yarrick's blood racing was what they were doing to Cecil. He knew that Slaanesh was the Dark God of forbidden passions, yet he had never imagined this was part of their heathen doctrine. As Yarrick stood there, frozen on the spot with rage, one of the cultists noticed the tall, grey-bearded stranger, but did not seem to recognise who he was. Instead of charging and attempting to kill the stranger the Slaaneshii walked up to him.

"Come traveller, why don't you join us in our merry making?" the cultist asked with a wry smile.

Yarrick closed his eyes and inclined his head forward just a little. The smile on the face of the cultist widened in approval and then vanished from his face like a drop of water from a hot iron rod when he saw the sword on the stranger's back, but it was too late.

Yarrick threw open his eyes and fixed the Slaaneshii cultist to the spot with the stare of golden yellow eyes. Wolf eyes.

The first cultist hit the far wall with a bang, his back broken. His fellows looked up from what they were doing and saw their death in the shape of a two metres tall man with a silver sword with a gold aquila handle. The handle had the same colour as the man's eyes, but the eyes were not those of a man at all.

"The Wolf!" one of them shouted, probably the leader. "The Wolf has returned! Hah! Offer his body to the Dark Divinity that is Slaanesh, brothers! Show him a whole new spectrum of pain!"

With a fierce shriek, the Chaos pulled their weapons, only to be met with a guttural snarl and the perfectly honed edge of the Yarrick sword.

Yarrick slashed and hacked his way through the cultists. These were in no way worthy of his rage; they were not worthy prey. He felt the urge to kill surge through him like a tidal wave and God-Emperor it felt so good. As the last of his opponents fell, Yarrick fought back an inhuman urge to howl out his victory. A small yelp escaped him. There was suddenly another urge there; an urge that was far more repulsive. He felt that he needed to consume the flesh of his fallen enemies. Yarrick suddenly felt that his canine teeth had grown almost a full two centimetres and realised what was happening to him. Caspar, old uncle Caspar, had told him about it so many years ago, but he had not told the entire truth. The Wolf curse affected Rolf too. He was no half-breed Space Marine. He was a Wolf, just as Caspar's brother had been. But where he had been a monster, Yarrick was a hero, an Imperial Hero who had managed to suppress his animal urges and used his powers for the Imperium and the God-Emperor of Mankind. Until now.

It took him almost an inhuman force of will to push back the wolf inside him, the very source of his powers, but he managed. As Yarrick looked up, his eyes back to their normal emerald green, he saw only the bodies of five cultists around him. That was barring Cecil's corpse.

"One funky move, and the child buys a one way ticket to the darkest pits of the Warp, Wolf!"

The voice was harsh and served its purpose in attracting Yarrick's attention. Yarrick turned round and saw the leader of the cultists, a tall athletic man with a Slaanesh rune tattooed over the left half of his face, pointing a laspistol at the

temple of a terrified five year old boy. The boy had bluish black hair and green eyes, just like Rolf Yarrick.

"So it comes to this, you spineless piece of Warp filth?" Yarrick mocked. He still felt the Wolf, lurking just underneath his skin, ready to pounce once again. "Threatening a child in exchange for your right to flee, tail between the legs? No wonder your master never can best the Blood God in your Infernal hierarchy."

"You dare speak such blasphemy of Master Slaanesh!" The cultist shrieked and aimed the pistol at Yarrick. It was his last mistake, ever. Yarrick was on him in a split second, putting himself between the gun and the boy. As the Yarrick sword pierced the chest of the cultist leader, Yarrick looked him straight in the eyes and whispered "Tell your master, from me, that I am back and this time I won't shirk from any challenge! Come and get me, if you can!"

With that, Yarrick pushed the dying cultist off his blade and let him fall to the ground with an empty thud. Quickly wiping the blood off his sword on the silk clothing of the cultists and sheathing it in one smooth motion, Yarrick then turned to the, by now, deeply traumatised boy.

He knelt down and looked at him, seeking eye contact. The boy looked back, after a few moments of reluctance. Yarrick knew the look the boy had. He had once had it himself. The look of a boy made rootless, scared and alone in the cold universe.

"What's your name, lad?" Yarrick asked, trying to sound like the grand-father he was.

"Se-sebastian Yarrick," the boy replied. "Who are you?"

"I am Rolf Yarrick," Yarrick said, fighting back the urge to add "your grand-father".

"Rolf... Then... you're my grand-father? Mom and dad talks about you. A lot. You should tell them you're-" Sebastian cut off as he saw the body of Cecil, despite Yarrick's best efforts to hide it from his view. The young boy's eyes widened in horror as the true extent of his loss dawned on him and Rolf Yarrick grabbed hold of the boy, lifted him up and carried him out of the house, before he could protest.

As Yarrick left Frederick's home, with young Sebastian on his shoulder, screaming, kicking and crying out to be with his mother, Rolf made his mind up on one particular point. Sebastian was to be more or less entirely cut off from his Callidussian roots. With a little bit of luck, he would not even remember what had actually happened to his mother and "father".

McKenzie had been right; you can take a commissar out of duty, but you can not take the duty out of a commissar. And the first thing a commissar learns is to lie.

Nearly five years later, Rolf Yarrick sat looking out a vast vista of ash wasteland on Armageddon. He was currently living in Infernus Hive and was an honoured guest of the Lord Governor, Wilhelm von Strab. Rolf had opted not to fill Sebastian in on what exactly had happened on Callidus that day. They boy sincerely believed he was an orphan, in the care of his grand-father.

Governor von Strab, who was sitting next to him, seemed to understand what was going through Yarrick's head.

"You have to tell him some day, Rolf. It is inevitable. The truth wants out and it will find a way out," he chided.

"One day," Yarrick replied slowly. "But not now. He's just gotten some roots, something to call a home, Wilhelm. I can't take that away from him, now can I?" von Strab shook his head.

"He seems to be getting along famously with Luthor, doesn't he?" von Strab remarked, changing the subject slightly and indicated the two young boys, playing with the von Strab family's gyrex, Sela. Yarrick simply nodded.

There was a moment of silence between the two men.

"Sebastian has picked up the Armageddon dialect," Yarrick said at final. "He referred to me as 'Opa' the other day."

"High Armageddonian, to be more precise, Rolf. But I see what you mean. Yet, you remark on it as if it was a bad thing."

Yarrick gave a shrug. "It could be, if he is to have a position within Imperial Administration."

"So..." the Lord Governor said, not quite wanting to voice his thought, as he knew how it would be received. "He's not to be an Imperial Commissar, then?"

"No," was Yarrick's curt reply. He was silent for a little while before adding, "I became one. Look at what it gave me. A life of endless sorrow. I want at least Sebastian's life to have a fairly happy end to it."

"All life ends with death, Rolf. You of all people should know that."

Yarrick nodded again and there was another moment of silence between them. Yarrick watched his grand-son playing with his friend. He hoped the friendship would last to adulthood. It would give Sebastian something to call a family, when Rolf himself was gone.

"You said you would tell Sebastian about his parents one day, Rolf. Any idea when? I'm sorry if I sound prying, but I am just curious. No need to reply if you don't want to."

"No bother, Wilhelm. I will tell you why and when. When: it will have to be soon. Why: let me show you." Rolf straightened his left arm and relaxed his left hand. There was an almost unnoticeable tremor to it after a few seconds. Yarrick quickly clasped his hand to hide the tremor.

"God-Emperor..." Wilhelm whispered. "Has this been for long?"

"It has gotten worse these last few years. I think my whole genetic structure is dismantling itself. At least that was what Master Lexicanum McKenzie told me when I informed him of the tremor."

"McKenzie of the Death Angels Legion?"

"Are there any other?"

"True. But... what can be causing that? Is it a disease or age or... what?"

"A little bit of both," Yarrick said with a wry smile. "I'm almost 250 years old, Wilhelm, so of course it could be age."

"I keep forgetting that..." Wilhelm mumbled silently to himself, but Yarrick heard him.

"You are in good company. I do it some times too. McKenzie's theory of cause is this." Yarrick showed Wilhelm his right hand, as if the Lord Governor had never seen it before. Yarrick's right hand was bionic, a mechanoid prosthetic to replace his old one, which he had lost to the cursed blade of Lord Kharn during their last encounter. Yarrick told this to Wilhelm as well.

"So, there could be Chaos to it as well?" von Strab asked tentatively. Yarrick shot him a dark look, telling him not to go there.

"I didn't say that."

"Yet fact remains; you have, up until the point where your hand was cut off, not aged visibly since your 25th birthday. Then the Dark Lord goes and chops your right hand off with a daemon blade, you get a prosthetic and start to grey. What part of that is not blatantly obvious?"

Yarrick did not reply. He did not want von Strab's words to be true, yet deep down he knew the man was right. Yarrick's death sentence had been signed more than thirty years ago. He had lost against Kharn. Or had he?

"This might sound excessively rude, but how many years have you got left, Rolf? How many more years do you think you can carry on like you do now?"

"I am retired."

"You know what I mean. The whole Imperium knows about your vow not to rest until Kharn meets his maker. Why else would you continue fighting like his? Most people think that your resignation from commissarial and military duty was just a new tactic, to gather strength and train and hone your personal fighting skills. Were they wrong? Were all their hopes misgiven?"

"Are you certain you aren't a relative of McKenzie?" Yarrick asked, an impish light in his eye. It hadn't been there a moment before, but von Strab was relieved to see the Imperial Hero take the question so lightly. Maybe there was nothing to be worried about after all.

"Wilhelm, right now, my main concern is raising Sebastian to be a proper Imperial citizen. It isn't easy, being a single parent. I can't carry out that duty, as well as any obligations to the Imperial Guard, at the same time. I learned that in the past. You have no idea how many of my children I alienated myself from, because of my duties to the Emperor. I won't let it happen again. And to answer your question; I have more than enough years left to raise Sebastian and face off again Kharn once more. This time, he won't get the better of me, I know it."

"And Sebastian's parents' true fate?"

"Somewhere in-between his adulthood and my death, most likely."

"And when do you consider Sebastian adult more precisely?"

"When he turns fifteen."

"That's when you'll tell him?"

"Maybe, maybe not. But I can't be more precise."

Wilhelm von Strab shook his head, smiling. The two men lapsed back into silence. There was not much else to add to the matter. Suddenly, Yarrick came to attention and half-rose out of his chair.

"Sebastian, be careful wi-" he began but was cut off by a howl of pain. Luthor von Strab had taken a firm grip around the family gyrix and tried to pry it off Sebastian's left arm. Rolf Yarrick quickly got down to the two boys, followed by Wilhelm.

"Let go, Seela!" Luthor demanded from his pet, putting his own fingers at risk as he tried to pry the animal's jaws open and loosen the paws from Sebastian's flesh. Apart from the tears rolling down his cheeks, Sebastian made no other sound. Lord Governor von Strab was amazed at the mettle of the boy, but ascribed it to the tutelage of Rolf Yarrick.

Yarrick himself just grabbed the gyrix firmly by the scruff of its neck and stared it square in the eyes.

"Let go!" he growled. Seela immediately obeyed and let go of Sebastian's arm.

"Rolf, I'm so sorry. She usually isn't like this. I-" von Strab apologised, but Yarrick cut him off.

"No, don't worry about it, Wilhelm. I'll have to take Sebastian to a doctor, though."

"I'll call for the house doctor. No need to pay, of course."

Yarrick nodded and followed Wilhelm von Strab out into the outer chambers, Sebastian in tow, whimpering only slightly.

Young Luthor von Strab was left behind. Luthor knew why Seela had attacked, but he dared not voice it. And he knew why she had let go. He had seen that too.

When he and Sebastian had played with Seela, the tricks Sebastian had made had been pulled off with a slight golden yellow glow to his green eyes, gone as suddenly as it had appeared. And when Herr Yarrick had told Seela to let go, he had had the same golden yellow glow to his eyes, just more intensive.

Luthor had seen those eyes on only one kind of animal. An animal considered almost as sacred as the eagle.

"Wolves," he said silently to himself.

"Opa, I still don't understand why we're here. It's not as if I have any connection to Callidus, is it?" Sebastian Yarrick, 15 years old, complained to his grand-father. He could not for his life understand why they had to go to Callidus. "I am Armageddonian. I speak both High and Low Armageddonian flawlessly. Why do I have to go to Callidus?"

"To find out the truth about your past and yourself, Sebastian," Rolf Yarrick calmly replied. The boy had complained about this ever since they had left Armageddon a week ago. Rolf had planned the journey so that they would arrive at their destination on Sebastian's 15th birthday.

"What do you mean, truth? I am an orphan, you took care of me after retiring. That's the truth, isn't it?"

"It's one truth," Rolf replied, again just as calmly.

"Eh?"

The two men, the grey-haired Rolf Yarrick and the bluishblack-haired Sebastian, were walking the last two kilometres to the Yarrick tomb, though Rolf had not told Sebastian about their destination yet. It would be quite a surprise. As would the other information he would divulge to the lad today. Yet it had to be done. There was not much time left.

"You will learn, Sebastian, that there can be more than one truth to things. For example, the Dark Lord Kharn is a hideous traitor that should be hated, truth. But he is also a master strategist, who knows how to use his soldiers to maximum effect and thus shouldn't be underestimated. Another truth, that doesn't necessarily exclude the other."

"Okay, Opa, I follow you, but what has that to do with me. And more to the point, my relationship with you?"

"More than you think," Rolf muttered. Sebastian gave his grand-father a puzzled look, but the old man took no notice.

They were getting close to the tomb now. Rolf could almost smell it in the air. It was getting time to tell Sebastian about his parents. But where to begin?

"Sebastian, do you remember your parents?" he began.

"I remember mother well enough. She was very kind. Though there was always something sad about her. At least from what little I remember. I was so young when the accident happened. I barely remember her face."

Rolf winced at the mention of the "accident". Sebastian had no idea what kind of accident it had been. The young man continued.

"It's the same with father. For some reason, I have never felt I got really close to him, the little time I knew him. It was as if he distanced himself from me deliberately. I can't fathom why he would do that."

"How did they die, do you think?"

"You told me; it was an accident. Slippery road. Frekk happens. Right?"

Rolf decided to grab the bethas by the horns. "It was no accident, Sebastian. Not like that, at least."

"What do you mean?"

"It is true your parents died in an accident, yes. But not like that. Your father died many years before your mother. You weren't even born when James Yarrick died."

"My father was named Frederick. I figured you'd know, being his father and all."

"My mind hasn't gone yet, Sebastian. Your father was none else than James Yarrick, the man Cecil, your mother, married and that Frederick Yarrick, your uncle and Imperial Commissar, took care of at my command, more or less."

"But, if my biological father was Captain James Yarrick... why didn't mother take care of me on my own?"

"I wouldn't let her."

"Why not?"

"Too dangerous."

"What do you mean 'too dangerous'?"

"Sebastian, your real father, died by my hand." There, it was said.

The young man just stood gaping, aghast. He'd stopped dead in his tracks and just stared at his grand-father.

"You did what?"

"I killed him."

Rolf saw the question forming in Sebastian's eyes, but the boy couldn't bring himself to utter it. Rolf decided to beat him to it.

"James was mortally wounded. Bolt in the gut. He asked me, practically begged me, to end his life. And I did."

"Why? You have always told me that life is precious, that we have no right to end a life, any life, arbitrarily."

"Would you refuse the last wish of someone you love, Sebastian?" Rolf asked and looked his grandson square in the eyes. Sebastian could not quite meet the gaze, cast down his eyes and shook his head.

"I thought so," Rolf added. There was a brief silence and then he continued. "I did the same to Frederick."

Sebastian looked up sharp. "You're kidding me! As if it weren't bad enough that you killed one of my fathers, you have to go kill the last one I have!"

"Most people only ever have one father, Sebastian, so count yourself as lucky. It was the same scenario; he was mortally wounded and asked me to kill him. I had no choice. But know this; every time I've seen someone dear to me die, without being able to prevent it, I've felt a part of me go cold and die. Having to do that to my own sons were more than ten times worse."

Sebastian seemed to stomach this for a moment and then asked what he had been thinking of for the last five minutes.

"Did you kill mother too?"

"Cecil? No. She was already dead when I found her."

"Dead as in not herself or-?"

"Dead as in dead, Sebastian. Your family home, the day your parents died, was attacked by Slaaneshii cultists. Remember what I've told you about their practices? Do you remember what Slaanesh stands for in the Dark Pantheon?"

"Yes, he's the god of forbidden pleasures and passions..." Sebastian's voice trailed off as he realised what had happened to his mother ten years ago. He suddenly remembered what he had seen. "My good God-Emperor... That is sick!"

"I thought so too," Rolf said, understating his reaction to what he had seen. "I informed the cultists of this."

"You didn't-?"

"I killed them all, Sebastian. All of them. How could I let the heathens live after having seen something like that?"

"I should have known."

"What?"

"That's what you do. It's your answer to everything: killing it. Wherever you go, death follows. Isn't that the true

reason they call you the Wolf of Callidus?"

Rolf gave Sebastian a hard look, but this time the boy did not look away.

"I never said I enjoyed doing it," Rolf growled.

"Oh, don't you? Right now, I can almost see you bristling! Heck, even your hand is reaching for the pommel of your sword, Opa!"

Rolf stopped dead when he realised that the boy was right; his hand had actually strayed towards his sword. Was the Wolf Curse affecting him more than he'd thought?

"I'm right, aren't I?" Sebastian asked with a self-assured voice.

Rolf hesitated before before he answered. "Maybe," he said at length. "If it is so, then you might understand why I so dearly want you to be different, Sebastian?"

Sebastian looked a bit stumped at this answer, but he did understand the point his grand-father wanted to get across. It made sense. In the insane and war-filled life that Rolf Yarrick had lived, his actions toward Sebastian made sense. Sebastian had to conclude that his grand-father was not the most complete of people in terms of emotions. And frankly speaking, who was? Was Sebastian himself a "whole person", when it came to it?

"You said there was another reason for taking me to Callidus, Opa. What was that? It can't most certainly not only have been to reveal this... ghastly truth to me."

"Ghastly?" Rolf asked and started walking again. Sebastian followed without question this time.

"Yes, it is ghastly to know that my own grand-father killed my... there is no other way to put it; my two fathers. It is ghastly to find out that my grand-father is a man who lives on slaughter and mayhem. But it doesn't change the truth that already is there; you're fighting for the Imperium, fighting and killing in the name of the Emperor. You're also my grand-father and, God-Emperor help me, I can't say other than that I love you."

"There you see; both are truths. One doesn't exclude the other."

"I understand that much. So what was your other reason for dragging me with you to Callidus? No, let me rephrase that: what is the real reason you brought me here?"

Rolf stopped in front of a large and sombre building made out of dark basalt. "This," he said and turned to Sebastian. "This is the Yarrick family tomb. This is what I wanted to show you."

"Yarrick family...? What is it doing on Callidus?" Sebastian asked, quite visibly astonished by the building.

"Because this is where we come from, Sebastian. You too were born on Callidus, but I took you away. Hid you, you could say. Hid you, not from physical enemies but from memories that could be activated by places on Callidus."

"You seem to know a lot about repressed memories, Opa," Sebastian said with a wry smile. Rolf's look was dead serious, though.

"Yes, I do. The tomb was constructed on the same spot where my childhood home stood, before it was burnt down."

"Burnt down?" Sebastian asked, genuine curiosity in his eyes. Rolf did not often speak of his past. This might be one of those rare occasions when Sebastian could learn something from the man himself instead of history books.

Rolf understood the look in his grand-son's eyes. "Let's go inside. I can tell you more there," he said, evading the question in an elegant manner.

Rolf unlocked the heavy oaken door and pulled it open. There was a slight squeal of protest from the hinges and Rolf sourly reflected that he would have to get somebody to oil them. He did not have the time, never had. What did not cross his mind was that they had always been practically soundless these last two hundred years.

He led Sebastian inside and followed suit, taking the door with him. Sebastian gaped at the large concrete and basalt angels and busts that watched next to the almost two dozen or more sarcophagi. The interior was decorated in the same manner as any Imperial church, just without the many windows, giving the whole place a very gloomy look indeed. There were a few rows of hardwood benches on each side of the main walkway down to the altar, so the building was obviously intended for funerals as well. The altar itself was dominated by a large sculpture, not an angel, not the usual double eagle either, but a larger than life statue of a tall and muscular man. Sebastian thought there was something vaguely familiar with the man's face. He was dressed in the formal attire of the Callidussian nobility, except that his muscular arms were bare. And his hands were clasped in front of his chest, as if in standing prayer. But there was something about the pose that suggested that praying was not the thing this statue was supposed to symbolise.

"Hrodwulf Le'man Yarr'eich. Our ancestor. The man who made the sword I now wield," Rolf said, seeing Sebastian's amazed stare. He walked up next to his grand-son. "Hrm. I haven't thought about that before."

"What, Opa?"

"That the sculptor based Le'man's looks on mine."

"I just wondered why he looked familiar." This made Rolf laugh out loud. The boy had a knack of being funny without noticing. And when he really tried...

"Sebastian, come with me," Rolf said and indicated a certain couple of sarcophagi. Sebastian followed.

"This is where your parents lie, Sebastian; all three of them," Rolf said and indicated the sarcophagi. "They fulfilled their duty to the Emperor more than enough. Honour them and remember their sacrifice; that is all I demand of you." Rolf fell silent and moved away from Sebastian, leaving the boy alone to ponder his memory of them. As he got to the door of the tomb, he turned round.

"I'll be waiting outside, Sebastian," he said and walked out.

Sebastian was standing beside the tomb of his mother. He barely paid attention to his grand-father's comment. His mind was busy contemplating something, something that had bothered him for quite some time.

His grand-father wanted him to become an ordinary citizen of the Imperium, a pen-pusher of the Administratum or a cog-boy of the Adeptus Mechanicus. But, as Sebastian learned more and more about his past and the Yarrick family's past, he could not see any other future for himself but that of a warrior, a soldier in the Imperial Guard. Maybe he would

even become an officer one day. Both his fathers had been officers in the Guard, Frederick had even been a Commissar. Why could not he, Sebastian, be one?

The Imperium of Mankind was beset on all sides by enemies that sought to bring it down; it needed its soldiers. Sebastian wanted to be one but he did not know how to put forth that to his grand-father. Rolf had done all in his power to make sure Sebastian had a genteel upbringing. And yet Sebastian could not help himself: he felt his place was on a battle field, not in an office. Something within him wanted him to fight the foul creatures of Chaos and the loathsome heretics and aliens.

"I will just have to tell him straight," Sebastian said to himself. "He will understand. He must understand how I feel after having seen you." The last bit was aimed at the sarcophagi.

His mind made up, Sebastian made for the door. As he got outside, the sharp sunlight blinding him for a short moment, he walked up behind Rolf.

"Opa, I have something I must-"

"Sebastian, get back inside," Rolf interrupted. "Now!" His back was turned from Sebastian during all this. There was something in his stance that gave Sebastian a slightly creeping feeling.

"But, Opa, I-"

"Inside! Now!" This time, it was an order. Sebastian felt the authority in the words. By now, he had gotten so close, he saw that Rolf's hand was firmly on the hilt of his sword. It was pulled out of its sheath by just a centimetre, but Sebastian saw the faint glow in the blade.

Slowly, painfully slowly, Sebastian turned his eyes from Rolf to where he was looking. He felt his stomach lurch at the sight. Barely twenty metres away from both of them, a giant in red power armour was standing. The brazen trims of his armour seemed to meld with the red in an organic manner. His left arm's armour was completely missing and long antlers were growing out of his helmet. The green eye slits of the helmet seemed to burn with an inner light. In the monster's right hand, a long, wickedly shaped blade that oozed green fumes was clutched firmly. The tattered and blood splattered loincloth it was wearing bore the unmistakable Khorne rune. Sebastian felt his stomach lurch again as he realised that it was made of human skin.

The monster spoke. "So, you are Sebastian Yarrick?" It was a deep, pleasant voice, but the mere fact that Sebastian felt, rather than heard some of it, made him uneasy. No human could have a voice that went down into the infra sound range.

"Your business is with me, not him, Kharn," Rolf said and drew the monster's attention away from his grand-son. Sebastian, being released from Kharn's gaze, fled inside the Yarrick family tomb. He knew he was out of his league.

As Sebastian closed the heavy door shut behind him, Kharn chuckled slightly.

"You still care too much, Yarrick. Do you really think you can take me on?"

"I don't think about it, Kharn," Yarrick replied. "I have no choice but to take you on; you made it so. I did not choose this moment."

Kharn gave another chuckle and started to walk towards the greying Yarrick. "You are ageing, Yarrick. There is little to no chance of you even scratching me. If you had come earlier, with this same determination, you could have had a chance. But not now. Not ever."

Kharn stopped a few metres short of Rolf. Rolf knew what the chaos filth had seen. He had not shown it in his voice, but Rolf knew that Kharn had seen the yellow glint in his eyes, seen that there was no opening in Yarrick's guard. Rolf knew because he felt it in every fibre of his body.

"I am ageing because of you, Kharn. You cost me my right hand and more that day forty years ago. But I am better prepared today."

"Are you?" Kharn replied. Still no hint of a doubt in his voice. Well, that would change soon enough.

"When we first met, I was fuelled by hatred, just like you. And just like you, I made mistakes," Yarrick explained. The last remark gave a slight reaction; a twitch in the left biceps. "And last time we met face to face, I was consumed by my love for my family, which you duly pointed out, was a weakness. True. But I have learned my lesson well." Yarrick paused a short moment. "My hatred for you burns stronger than ever; I need that to kill you. But my love for my family is undiminished; it is what will make me go all out. Together, these two emotions will help me destroy you."

"You think that is enough to kill me? Some paltry emotions?"

"Of course I'll need to use the sword."

"Haven't you ever wondered why I do this, Yarrick? Why I turned against the Imperium and gave up all?" Kharn asked.

"To be honest, the reasons why did not enter my mind. I was occupied with how to destroy you. And why should I listen? For all I know, it is lies of the Warp."

Kharn's next comment surprised Yarrick. "I respect you too much as a warrior and adversary to lie to you at a time like this. Remember, I was once a Space Marine, a battle brother to the likes of McKenzie and McGranth." Kharn started to unbuckle his helmet with his free hand and pulled it off. It fell to the ground with a clanging noise. Yarrick stared at the, despite the scars, still fairly handsome face. This was the face of his nemesis?

"I once served in the same company as Charleston. But where they still struggle in the dark, I have seen the truth."

"Truth?"

"What will become of us Space Marines when the Imperium bests its opponents. When I liberated the Axe of Khaine from the Eldarain, I stared into the Well of Souls on board their Craftworld. I am glad I did. The future I saw was not a pretty one. A humanity reduced to nothing, ending its days as slaves to aliens instead of gloriously ruling the galaxy; that is what I saw. I have worked ever since to prevent that future from becoming."

"Have you? To me, it seems more like you are marching in the line of fell gods, gods that seek to exploit humanity in

just the way you wanted to avoid. There is a reason we refer to your lot as slaves to darkness."

"Chaos can be dominated."

"Not by those mortal born. How do you know you're the one in command, Kharn? What guarantees it? How can you know, when you have willingly given up your own free will?" Yarrick knew he was pushing things in a very metaphysical direction, but he did so on purpose. He knew that eventually, Kharn could not follow him. Charleston had not when Yarrick had exposed him to this question, and neither had McGranth. McKenzie had been a different business altogether, but Kharn were not of McKenzie's intellectual calibre and Yarrick knew that.

Kharn did not disappoint him. He gave the exact reaction Yarrick had hoped to provoke; rage.

With a snarl, Kharn swung his sword against Yarrick in a horizontal, slashing motion. Yarrick met it with his own sword, drawn in one smooth motion from its sheath.

Kharn had known there was no opening to the guard Yarrick had posed, but overcome by rage, he had not been able to stop himself. Now, however, both had his guard broken and Kharn went all out on the offensive.

Kharn went in with another attack, barely pausing after the first one. Yarrick knew full well why: a normal human would have been sent reeling from a direct parry, but Kharn was anything but human. Yarrick actually resented having parried the blow; it had sent a sharp pain into his shoulder. He doubted he could parry another one like that and be sure his shoulder would not pop out of its joint. So he opted to use the one thing Kharn did not have: swiftness.

Despite his ageing body, Yarrick was still more than capable to dodge and roll out of harm's way. As Kharn lunged in again, Yarrick dove to the right and struck at Kharn's exposed left arm. Kharn spun just in time so that Yarrick's blow struck the armour of the power armour's backpack. Cursing under his breath, Yarrick ducked as Kharn came full circle in his motion and sliced his daemon blade through the air where Yarrick had been a split second before.

Rolling backwards, Yarrick tried to distance himself from the monster and get a chance to spring back at him before Kharn regained his balance from the wild swing. As Yarrick came in at him, Kharn raised his unarmoured left arm, but not to block.

Kharn got his arm in underneath Yarrick's blade and grabbed him out of the air. Yarrick let out a gasp of pain as he felt Kharn's fingers dig into his chest.

With a grunt, Kharn threw Yarrick at the doors of the tomb. As Yarrick struck them, he felt how the wood gave way behind him and sent him crashing inside.

As he landed on the ground with a thud his mind was already twitching his toes to see if his back had been broken. It had not. Rolling round, Yarrick prepared to meet Kharn once again. It was clear that he did not have the speed necessary to pull off such a stunt any more.

Yarrick got ready to dodge again as he heard a guttural war cry from outside. As Kharn stormed at him, Yarrick prepared his move. It had to be timed well to be successful. As Kharn sent his blade crashing down two-handedly in a vertical slice, Yarrick dodged to the right again. This time, however, he switched his blade from the right to the left hand, holding it in a dagger-like fashion.

This time, Kharn could not dodge and the Yarrick sword left a long, deep gash in the Berzerker Lord's left arm. Kharn let out a bestial yowl of pain and turned towards Yarrick deal him a blow with his fist wrapped around the daemon sword's hilt.

He never got so far as landing the blow. Kharn stopped suddenly, his face mere millimetres from Yarrick's blade tip. The silver blade of the daemon slayer sword glittered in the gloom of the tomb, which had been reduced a bit by the sudden removal of the door.

Red blood dripped like pearls from the blade and struck the ground underneath it.

"It ends here, Kharn," Yarrick said. The yellow glow was back in his eyes.

"Khorne cares not whence the blood flows, Yarrick," Kharn replied confidently.

"Maybe he doesn't but you, and I, do," Yarrick said and pushed the blade forward so it touched Kharn with its tip between his eyes. A tiny drop of blood welled up where the skin had been pierced.

"Opa?" Sebastian asked and looked up from his hiding place. "Is it safe?"

Yarrick's attention was shifted for a split second from Kharn to his grandson. It was all Kharn needed.

The Berzerker Lord took a step backwards, brought up his sword and in the same motion lunged forward. The Yarrick sword passed by his right ear, harmlessly as he dove in.

Yarrick's attention was shifted back by Kharn's initial motion, but it was too late. In horrid fascination, he saw the blade come at his chest. He saw how it pierced his skin, went through his sternum, but he did not feel it. Yarrick heard how the daemon blade, with a wet squelch, came out his back.

Kharn almost ripped the blade out of Yarrick's body.

The Yarrick sword hit the floor with a clang, dropped. The glow on it vanished.

Slowly, like a falling autumn leaf, Yarrick fell to the ground and came to rest on his back. As he felt the last of his life leave him, he saw that Sebastian was once again safely hidden. Then he heard the dark chuckle of Kharn as the Berzerker Lord stood over him, triumphant. Yarrick tried to make his lips give a defiant reply, but they would not respond. The edges of the red giant grew fuzzier by the second. He could not hear him anymore.

Then darkness.