



BLOODSPIRE

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**SCENE ONE - EXT. HIVE PRIMUS,
AXONAR.**

ATMOS: The cacophony of battle. Multiple bolters fire along with missile launchers and other heavy weapons. In return, autocannons fire back.

War came swiftly to Axonar, though in the reckoning of things they drew it down upon themselves.

One day, the noble families of the looming hive cities, cloistered in their spires, simply decided that their tithe of psykers to the Imperium was too great. It was the closely-knit bloodlines of the upper echelons that paid the highest toll, the warp touch being rife among their children thanks to centuries of inbreeding. And so, when next the black

ships came to claim the children of Axonar and press them into the service of the Golden Throne, they were refused; refused and then set upon by the hive militia who had long been loyal to the noble houses of the spire. Across the planet, in all of the major hive cities, the yoke of Imperial rule was overthrown, and in its place the aristocracy of the planet claimed the kilometres-high edifices as their own personal fiefdoms.

Then came the Blood Angels.

With darkness their mask, the Third and Fourth Companies, along with a contingent of Scouts, made their way to the planet's surface on board Thunderhawks and Stormravens, the lack of any anti-aircraft defences making the insertion a relatively straightforward affair. Once on the ground, the next stage of the mission was to storm the hive cities one at a time, until, in the face of such an overwhelming force, the planet's rulers would have no other option but to surrender and fall in line.

At least that was the plan.

METRAEN: 'Move the Vindicators up, I want those defences down now!'

FX - loud autocannon fire close to Metraen, followed by ricochet of bullets bouncing off tank armour

As if in response, the autocannon turrets mounted at the base of Axonar's primary

hive spat in Captain Metraen's direction, forcing the leader of the Blood Angels to take cover behind his Rhino command vehicle. His battle-brothers did likewise, their red forms darting behind their own transports, autocannon shells spanging harmlessly off the thick armour of the Rhinos' hulls.

FX - multiple bolters firing simultaneously

A break in the torrent of fire was met by the combined might of the entire Third Company targeting the enemy defences and, though the wall of bolter shells found their mark, its impact on the metres-thick adamantium shields erected by the secessionist forces was negligible. The enemy turrets opened up once more, forcing the Space Marines back into cover. The cacophony of battle drowned out all audible communication and sergeants issued hand signals to their squads, silently ordering them into new firing positions. When next the turrets ceased firing, it was the turn of the Third Company devastators to attempt to knock out the automated defences. Plasma cannons and missile launchers took aim and a barrage of fire was loosed towards the hive.

FX - plasma cannon and missile launcher noise

Though the damage they wrought was greater than their brothers' small arms fire, still the walls and turrets remained

intact and when the autocannons had finished reloading, another wall of solid shot sent the devastators back behind the ring of Imperial armour.

FX - bass rumble of tank engines getting closer

From behind the barricade formed by the Blood Angels armoured vehicles, three Vindicators in bright red livery - *Zorael's Remembrance*, *Baal's Fury* and *Sanguinius Rex* - rolled towards the base of the hive, their immense dozer blades clearing a path through the rock-strewn planetary surface of Axonar. Sensing the new threat, the autocannon turrets turned their attention to the siege breakers, but the stream of shells bounced harmlessly off the vehicles' armour plates. Pintle-mounted storm bolters returned fire as the tanks rolled inexorably towards their objective, crushing all beneath their tracks as if it were balsa wood.

METRAEN: 'Brother Elyon, bring those walls down. I want Third Company in there before the sun breaches the horizon.'

ELYON: <<'Acknowledged, captain.'>>

FX - grind of tank turret adjusting position

Manoeuvring his vehicle into optimum range, Elyon adjusted the firing angle of the huge Demolisher siege cannon mounted to the front of *Sanguinius Rex*. There

was a brief pause while the Vindicator's targeting servitor checked and double-checked every possible variable before the Blood Angels tank unleashed its deadly payload.

FX - huge tank gun firing followed by massive explosion

The self-propelled shell found its mark and, mere milliseconds after impact, detonated in a corona of explosive force. Debris and soil were thrown skywards and the Blood Angels line was pelted by meteoric stones, the remnants of much larger boulders disintegrated by the Vindicator's cannon. A cloud of dust billowed over the battlefield like rolling mist, obscuring the view of the target.

METRAEN: 'Elyon, report. Are the defences down?'

The Blood Angels captain made a sign with his left gauntlet and the hundred Space Marines under his command readied to assault the base of the hive, checking weapons and equipment and whispering battle prayers and litanies.

ELYON: <<'Unsure. The dust cloud isn't shifting very quickly. No, wait - negative. That's a negative. The adamantium shields are intact. I repeat, shields still intact.'>>

Metraen grimaced.

METRAEN: 'Understood. Zorael's Remembrance, Baal's Fury - move into

position. Linebreaker formation,
I want you to coordinate fire on my
command and-'

FX - missile whine

The unmistakable whine of a hunter-killer anti-tank missile interrupted the captain's orders.

METRAEN: 'Elyon, get your tanks out of there now!'

FX - tank exploding under missile fire

But the warning came too late for *Sanguinius Rex*. The missile hit the tank head-on, and though the heavily armoured dozer blade took the brunt of the explosion, the force of the impact flipped the *Vindicator* over, its vulnerable underbelly facing the enemy defences. *Zorael's Remembrance* and *Baal's Fury* arrested their advance and began reversing back towards Third Company's position, out of range of any further missiles.

The top hatch of the stricken *Vindicator* burst open and smoke poured forth from the aperture, quickly followed by the helmetless figure of Elyon, his red armour slick with his own blood. Emerging from the hatch, he began pulling himself along the ground. Metraen was momentarily confused; a Space Marine's implants and enhanced physiology should allow him to almost instantly recover from shock and trauma so why was the tank commander struggling?

He soon realised why.

Just below the right knee, Elyon's leg had been completely shorn off and as he dragged himself along the rocky ground he left a scarlet trail in his wake.

FX - autocannon fire

The autocannon turrets opened up once more but, with the lee of the wrecked Vindicator providing cover, the wounded Blood Angel was spared further maiming by enemy fire. Realising that their shells were useless against the tank's armour, the enemy changed tactics and the automated hunter-killer missile launcher retracted, ready to reload.

METRAEN: 'Blood of the primarch! He's not going to make it. Apothecary Refael, make ready to receive the casualty.'

Leaping from the cover of his command vehicle, Metraen began to sprint across the half-kilometre between himself and Elyon with a speed that belied the Space Marine's bulk. As captain of the Third Company, Metraen bore the title 'Master of Sacrifice' and while he was ready to forfeit weapons and vehicles to achieve victory - something that had almost brought him to blows with the Master of the Blade on more than one occasion - he was not prepared to waste the lives of his battle-brothers.

He wasn't the only one who thought that

way. To his left, an entire squad of Blood Angels had emerged from cover and were following their captain towards their wounded comrade. The white skulls set against the black kneepads they all wore came as no surprise to Metraen. Third Company's First Squad had a fearsome reputation among the Chapter and their sergeant, Tycho, was always eager to be at the front of any action.

Reaching Elyon, Metraen was soon joined by Tycho and the rest of First Squad. Risking a glance around the side of the Vindicator, the captain saw that the missile launcher had reloaded and was attempting to gain a targeting solution. Two battle-brothers dragged the prone form of the tank commander further into cover, while another loaded and primed his missile launcher.

METRAEN: 'Tycho, take that thing out.'

TYCHO: 'I thought you'd never ask.'

The veteran sergeant grinned in a manner that made Metraen feel uneasy. No Blood Angel was a stranger to battle, but Tycho revelled in warfare more than any other Space Marine the Third Company captain had ever fought alongside.

TYCHO: 'Orphael, you know what to do.'

Striding boldly from cover, First Squad's heavy weapons trooper took aim with

his missile launcher and, ignoring the autocannon fire that raked the ground around him, took a shallow breath and depressed the firing stud.

FX - missile whine

A split second later the hunter-killer launcher came to life, but before the tank-buster was free of its moorings, Orphael's missile found its mark.

FX - explosion

METRAEN: 'Excellent shot, Brother Orphael. Now, Brother Elyon, let's get you to safety and into the care of Refael, though I'm sure the good Apothecary will be most disappointed that the enemy have robbed him of the opportunity to perform a battlefield amputation.'

The tank commander grimaced, revealing bloodstained teeth.

ELYON: 'Thanks to you he won't be needing his reductor today.'

Metraen smiled in response to the gallows humour. Though a Space Marine could survive hardship and injury far in excess of a normal human being, they were not immortal and inevitably, the field of battle claimed them. When that day came, the Apothecaries were always on standby, ready to extract a fallen battle-brother's gene-seed to pass on to the next generation of recruits and ensure the Chapter's continued existence.

Two of Tycho's squad lifted the injured tank commander between them and, once back behind the shelter of the line of Rhinos, Apothecary Refael began his ministrations. Tycho ordered his squad back into position before conferring with his captain.

TYCHO: 'What's our course of action? Those adamantium shields are too thick to breach and an infantry assault will have us cut to ribbons. We'll lose the cover of darkness soon, and the longer it takes us to storm the hive, the more we risk getting bogged down and a siege situation developing.'

Metraen stroked his chin and, activating his helmet vox, stared in the direction of the hive city.

METRAEN: 'Any joy, Castigon? Have Fourth Company managed to penetrate the defences of Hive Secundus?'

CASTIGON: <<'Negative.'>>

Though hearing the voice of his fellow captain was reassuring, the message he delivered was not.

CASTIGON: <<'Those shields are just too damn thick. If I had some Dreadnoughts, even a couple of squads of Death Company, then maybe there'd be a way in, but as it stands, I'd suggest an orbital bombardment.'>>

Unease washed over Metraen at the mention

of the Death Company. For millennia, the Blood Angels had been afflicted by a genetic curse causing them to be overcome with battle lust, a Black Rage that could alter their perception of time and make them impervious to all but the most grievous of injuries. Though some welcomed the embrace of the Black Rage, others feared it in the knowledge that once they succumbed and took their place in the ranks of the Death Company, their service to the Primarch and the Emperor would soon be ended by death.

The First Sergeant broke the captain's reverie.

TYCHO: 'What are your orders, captain?'

METRAEN: 'Find me Sergeant Cardula and have him and his Scouts report here to me.'

TYCHO: 'And then what?'

METRAEN: 'Then...'

A smile flickered across Metraen's lips.

METRAEN: 'Then we assault those defences again.'

**SCENE TWO - EXT. HIVE PRIMUS,
AXONAR.**

ATMOS: The distant sound of battle coming from somewhere below. The faint howl of the wind at altitude. Metal on metal 'handsteps' of the mag-grabs.

METRAEN: <<'Confirm your position, Cardula.'>>

The veteran Scout sergeant halted his ascent and looked up towards his objective, then back down to his starting point at the base of the hive. Relinquishing his grasp of one of his mag-grabs, electromagnetic crampons that enabled a man, or in this case a Space Marine, to scale sheer surfaces that would be otherwise impossible to traverse, he tapped his vox-bead.

CARDULA: 'Halfway there, by my estimate.'

METRAEN: <<'Fourth Company will be in position in half a cycle. Maintain your current pace and call in once your mission is complete.'>>

The old Scout shut off his vox-bead and continued his arduous climb. He and the four Scouts under his command had already been climbing for half a cycle - almost eight Terran hours - and were now under the cover of the cloud blanket that hung five kilometres or so above Axonar's surface. The climb thus far would have been too much for a normal man, let alone the next five kilometres, but Cardula and his charges were no longer 'normal' men. Genetically enhanced with the gene-seed of their forebears, and implants that rendered them post-human, the Blood Angels Scouts were every inch a Space Marine, albeit at the dawn of their service. They were no longer 'human', but not yet fully fledged battle-brothers.

They moved in near-silence, only the tapping of their mag-grabs punctuating the gentle breeze of the Axonar night. None of them showed any signs of fatigue, and even Tarphon, the newest member of their squad on only his second combat mission, looked as fresh as when they'd set out many hours earlier.

Halting suddenly, Rampel, second only in seniority to Cardula and soon to take his

place in one of the Blood Angels battle companies, signalled to the rest of the squad to do the same. He motioned to his sergeant and then pointed upwards. Directly above them, an open balcony jutted out from the hive into the night sky. A haphazard affair, it gave the impression that it was an unauthorised modification made by some aspirational mid-hiver in imitation of the baroque marvels that adorned the outer quarters of the spire. Being careful not to make any more noise than was absolutely necessary, Cardula ventured a little higher to get a better view.

The scent of *obscura*, or a related narcotic, hit his nostrils before he caught sight of the balcony's occupant and when the smoker did hove into view, Cardula saw it was a militiaman, lasrifle slung by his side. Releasing his grip on one of his mag-grabs, Cardula issued a complex hand signal with his right hand, the position of each finger - fully extended, bent at the knuckle or fully bent - signifying what each member of the squad was to do next. Tarphon let go of both mag-grabs and, unsheathing his combat knife and placing it between his teeth, free-climbed so that he was parallel with the balcony, though out of view of the militiaman. Rampel, Cardula and Kachiel took up position several metres below the outcrop in the hive wall, while the squad's sniper, Sagon, navigated his way in a corkscrew motion

around the cylindrical hive outer wall to take his place ten metres directly above the balcony.

With an ease born from years of training and conditioning, what happened next was over in mere seconds. Using only one hand to cling to the side of the hive, Tarphon gripped the tip of his combat knife between the thumb and forefinger of his other hand and launched it spinning end over end towards the militiaman. Almost instantaneously, the blade lodged itself in the man's throat and, unable to scream through ruined vocal chords, he pitched forwards over the lip of the balcony, where he was caught by Rampel and Kachiel. Cardula removed the young Scout's knife from the man's throat and used one of his mag-grabs to lock him in position against the metal wall of the hive, lest a corpse falling to the base of the spire alert the enemy to activity up above. The militiaman hung there, legs and arms spasming as the life drained from him, eyes bulging as his situation became apparent.

Several minutes passed, during which the militiaman expired silently, though the Blood Angels Scouts, if they were even aware of his passing, gave no sign as they hung motionless like macabre red gargoyles. At a signal from Sagon, satisfied that nobody had witnessed their clandestine killing, the figures sprang into motion again. Tarphon retrieved his

mag-grabs and, as he made to continue his ascent, Sergeant Cardula came alongside him and gave him back his combat knife with an appreciative nod.

Silent as the grave, the five Scouts headed once more in the direction of their objective.

**SCENE THREE - EXT. HIVE PRIMUS,
AXONAR**

ATMOS: As Scene One.

The wall of Blood Angels vehicles unleashed an unrelenting torrent of fire against the hive, halting only to reload weapons and find new targeting solutions. Sparks flew in all directions as metal impacted against metal, but each shot only thinned the adamantium walls by mere millimetres. Missiles streaked towards weapons emplacements but, hidden as they were behind thick shields, more often than not they detonated prematurely, leaving the autocannons behind to send volley after volley against the Space Marines.

Though the Blood Angels second assault

on the base of Hive Primus was just as furious and unrelenting as the first, if the Axonar separatists had been paying close attention, then they might have noticed something amiss. Rather than Blood Angels using Rhinos as cover to fire behind, it was the armoured personnel carriers' weapons that were now trained on the base of the hive, servitors being employed to do the task previously carried out by battle-brothers.

Heavy weapons activity was less frequent too, as Brother Orphael fired from one position and then quickly scrambled to another location to unleash another missile, before repeating the process. To the casual onlooker, it may have seemed as if an entire company, two even, were arrayed against the rebellious forces of Axonar's capital hive.

In reality, it was just eleven Space Marines.

Ordering the rest of Third Company to rendezvous with Captain Castigon and return to orbit, Metraen had asked for one squad to remain with him to mount the second assault on Hive Primus. Without hesitation, Tycho volunteered First Squad and, after undergoing inspection by the Chaplains in case their eagerness for battle was the first sign of the Black Rage claiming them, the handful of Blood Angels set about making themselves appear to be a force ten times larger.

TYCHO: 'How much longer do we have to keep this up for?'

As usual, the First Sergeant was revelling in battle, and although the enemy lay behind several metres of adamantium, Tycho applied himself with all the zeal and dedication that he would wading through a greenskin horde. Metraen checked the chrono-readout on his helmet's visor display before replying.

METRAEN: 'Not long - one-sixteenth of a cycle.'

As Tycho unleashed another barrage of bolter fire against the automated turret system, Metraen was sure that the look the sergeant wore upon his face was one of disappointment.

**SCENE FOUR - EXT. HIVE PRIMUS,
AXONAR**

ATMOS: As Scene Two.

Three more times, Cardula's squad had come across militia sentries posted on balconies and three more times they had been silently dispatched, the wraith-like Scouts continuing ever upwards unmolested.

FX - metal on metal clangs but louder and with a different quality to the mag-grabs

Now, with their objective reached, all that was left to do was to carry out the final stage of their mission. The five Scouts worked quickly and tirelessly, placing magnetised packs at regular intervals around the spire. Within the space of mere minutes, their payload was

delivered and, as silently as they had ascended, the Blood Angels began their journey down.

After one last check that all of the explosives were in place, Cardula activated his vox-bead and began his own descent.

CARDULA: 'Mission accomplished. It's up to you now, Francesi.'

**SCENE FIVE - INT. THUNDERHAWK,
LOW ORBIT ABOVE AXONAR.**

ATMOS: The bass rumble of a Thunderhawk engine.

METRAEN: <<'Did you receive Cardula's last message? '>>

CASTIGON: 'Received and understood. Commencing assault now.'

FX - the ramp at the rear of the Thunderhawk lowers. The more it lowers the louder the noise of decompression becomes

High above the surface of Axonar, mere kilometres below the Karman line, two full companies of Blood Angels readied themselves for the battle to take Hive Primus. Weapons were loaded, litanies chanted and orders passed from sergeants to their squads.

CASTIGON: 'We only have one chance at this, brothers. Sergeant Cardula and his Scouts have done their job and now it is time to do ours. Remember, we have surprise on our side, the Emperor and Sanguinius at our backs and courage in our hearts. Let us go now to glory, or let us go now to death!'

The Fourth Company captain had broadcast his short speech over an open vox-channel and his earpiece filled with the sound of rousing cheers. On board each craft, Chaplains observed the eager battle brothers, looking for signs of the Red Thirst or the Black Rage, standing ready to tap the pauldron of any who succumbed and remove them from the order of battle. Sanguinius was smiling on them that day as not a single Blood Angel fell victim to either of their twin genetic flaws.

As the flight of Thunderhawks and Stormravens passed over the designated drop zone, red lights turned to green and armour-clad giants launched themselves into thin air, one after another, until the pre-dawn sky filled with a deadly red rain. At impossible speeds they hurtled to the ground, their power armour and implants compensating for the intense gravitational forces that would otherwise have killed them within seconds of leaving the craft. Frost formed on their armour as the thin night air deposited moisture on ceramite and then instantly froze it.

The first few kilometres quickly flashed by but as they broke cloud cover, the landscape below began to present itself. Though the first tendrils of sunlight were only just creeping through the darkness, the red and orange glow being cast by Metraen's assault far below guided them towards their objective like a beacon.

Castigon himself was the last man out of the last Thunderhawk. As he neared terminal velocity, he glanced upwards to see the Blood Angels flyers heading back to the Strike Cruiser awaiting them in orbit.

Saying a silent prayer to the Emperor and his primarch, Castigon hoped that Metraen had got his timing right on this, otherwise it was likely to be a short mission.

Less than a kilometre from the top of the hive, his prayers were answered.

FX - multiple explosions as the top of the hive is blown apart

FX - The buzz of hundreds of jump packs engaging

CASTIGON: 'By the blood of Sanguinius!'

**SCENE SIX - INT. HIVE PRIMUS,
AXONAR**

ATMOS: Battle noise, but inside rather than out so more echo on the gunfire.

The end, when it came, was swift, brutal and bloody.

With the upper hive blown open, almost two full companies engaged their jump packs and swept into Hive Primus. Their frustration at not being able to assault the hive directly at its base spilled over, and within a minute of the first Blood Angels setting foot within the spire, not a single separatist was left breathing on the upper level.

The Chapter's Techmarines had hijacked the planet's broadcast network and a live feed of the events unfolding in the

planet's capital played in every other city on Axonar. By the time Third and Fourth Companies had made it down another two levels, other hives had started to offer their unconditional surrender. Before the Blood Angels had even made it out of the spire, the upper levels of the hive reserved for solely for nobility and the ruling classes, the entirety of Axonar was back under the sway of the Imperium.

The broadcast feed was soon cut, but in the years that followed, years that saw Axonar's tithe of psykers trebled and a bloodless coup that removed the ruling families in one fell swoop, it was whispered that the Angels of Death made it much deeper into the hive, though there were no eyewitnesses to corroborate this. Only a single Blood Angel was wounded during the short, but brutally effective, war for Axonar and by the time they returned to Baal, Brother Elyon had already adapted to his augmetic leg.

SCENE SEVEN - EXT. HIVE PRIMUS,
AXONAR

ATMOS: Battle noise has abated, but the crackle of vehicles on fire and the sound of a Stormraven's engine can be heard.

CASTIGON: 'You know, Incarael may actually kill you for this.'

The Fourth Company captain gestured to the corral of Rhinos, two of which were now engulfed in flame. Oily smoke billowed from them, pushed across the battlefield by the Stormraven's idling engines.

METRAEN: 'If I'm to be the Master of Sacrifice then better it be equipment offered up on the altar of war than battle-brothers.'

CASTIGON: 'Agreed, brother, but I doubt the Master of the Blade will see it that way.'

Metraen looked contemplatively at the smouldering wrecks littering the battlefield.

METRAEN: 'Truly spoken... but I am right nonetheless.'

FX - clang of armour and multiple sets of armoured feet on a metal ramp

First Squad boarded the Stormraven with an eagerness that belied the fact that they'd just spent most of the night carrying out a relentless assault against impregnable defences. The only sign that they'd seen battle recently was the dirt and grime that coated their dented and pocked suits of power armour. The last of First Squad to board was Sergeant Tycho, and Castigon stopped him at the foot of the boarding ramp.

CASTIGON: 'A commendable effort, Sergeant Tycho, but answer me this. Why, when the glory was to be had storming the hive from the air, did you opt to take part in the dummy assault at the base?'

The Blood Angels sergeant looked towards his captain as if seeking permission to respond. Metraen nodded in reply.

TYCHO: 'Because I did not see it as glorious, Captain Castigon. A bunch of effete, over-privileged nobles who

barely know which direction to point a weapon... where's the challenge in that? Look at your armour.'

Castigon looked down at his pristine suit of red power armour then back at Tycho. The sergeant's left pauldron was split open and several autocannon rounds were lodged in the greave on his left leg. One of his gauntlets was missing and he had deep gouge on the side of his head.

TYCHO: 'Not a scratch on you, is there?'

Castigon was about to respond, but realised that any argument would be futile. The sergeant was right. Tycho turned away and continued up the ramp to join his squad.

CASTIGON: 'You need to keep an eye on that one. He'll either be the death of you, or the next to wear your cloak.'

METRAEN: 'You mean if Incarael doesn't take a bolt pistol to the back of my head first for blowing up more of his tanks?'

The two Blood Angels smiled. Metraen pointed towards the top of the hive.

METRAEN: 'Come. We have some passengers to collect.'

The two red-armoured figures ascended the Stormraven's ramp. The rear hatch closed and the war machine lifted slowly into the air.

Meanwhile, high above, Scout Sergeant Cardula and his squad continued their long climb back down without complaint, content in the knowledge of a job well done.

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