This isn’t a teaser – 17 November 2023

**Legacy 13.1**

**Legacy of War**

“*All your promises of Golden Age will turn to dust! This Light you worship as miraculous is only the candle that precedes the return of Old Night! Soon, your False Saint will understand that the Gods are the only salvation Mankind can count upon!*” Words attributed to Larxias, self-proclaimed ‘Oracle of Fate’, executed on 313M35 in the Atlantic Sector for heretical speech and hundreds of other crimes.

**The Warp**

**Battleship *Enterprise***

Thought for the day: Carry the Emperor’s will as your torch, with it destroy the shadows.

**Lord Inquisitor Odysseus Tor**

So far, the journey through the Warp had been relatively calm.

As he watched the tired expression of Lady Weaver, however, Odysseus knew that it may not have been calm for everyone.

The black-haired Living Saint was sipping her tea with the kind of expression the Lord Inquisitor had too often seen on the faces of his peers which had spent too many nights purging entire Hives from the taint of the Ruinous Powers.

“Problems?” he asked neutrally.

“Nightmares,” the Heroine of Macragge grunted. “Nightmares sent by the abominations.”

“Ah.” Why did he think he wasn’t about to hear bad news? “You could have stopped them long before they were a nuisance for you.”

“I could,” the starry-eyed Angel confirmed. “But the most sensitive souls of this fleet would have paid the price. I can see the lies in the visions the Four sent me. I can’t promise the same will happen for those confronted with the spectacles of horror of the Calyx Hell Stars.”

“The Ruinous Powers showed you the Calyx Hell Stars?” Odysseus cleared his throat. “An interesting choice.”

“They *only* showed me the Calyx Hell Stars. Each of the Four sent nightmares of a different part of this hell pit, but it was still the Calyx Hell Stars. I trust you understand the significance.”

“The Arch-Enemy is preparing something. And though unity is for them a thing of the past, they are ready to keep everything dark where we are concerned.”

“This is what I deduced too.” The woman who had destroyed Commorragh gave a nod, and a medium-sized beetle came forwards to bring refreshments. Odysseus Tor took it like the subtle invitation it was and took a chair.

For a couple of minutes, they emptied their respective cups of tea. Odysseus had tried chocolate since they left Macragge, but in his opinion, it was too sweet, too sugary. Or maybe it was the effect of his mouth being completely ravaged by an entire life drinking bad recaff?

“I was told,” the Lord Inquisitor said conversationally, “that the Ecclesiarchy found a new designation for the ruler of the Calyx Hell Stars.”

“Yes,” the lips twitched in a shadow of a smile, “they want to call her a ‘Cambion’, if my sources in the Ophelian Synod. It will likely take an official vote to confirm it, but I think it will pass.”

“You seem relatively unenthusiastic about the idea.”

“I understand the propaganda value.” Lady Weaver answered bluntly. “But it will be of only limited use. Unlike the previous Red Angel, the new Queen of Blood can’t be banished like a Greater Daemon would. By all rights, the levels of Warp corruption past the boundaries of the Calyx Hell Stars are not sufficient to allow Greater Daemons to endure outside of the battlefields. She should have already been on her way back to the abomination she serves. Yet she is still there.”

They had spoken of the similarities between Valkia and Living Saints before, and Odysseus had no reason to start again the conversation today. It gave him the urge to grimace. If the Nyx Sector was to be the heart of Weaver’s power, then it was clear Khorne wanted his Queen’s to be the Calyx Hell Stars.

“Were you able to gain some interesting information from these nightmares, at least?” He asked after aborting this depressing line of thinking.

“A few,” the star-filled eyes grew thoughtful. “Though as always, I think we must stay prudent. I could ascertain the visions were true, but I have no idea of the time scale. It could have been what is happening this year, or it could be future events. I lack the reference points to be sure.”

Yes, this was always a big problem when it came to the Ruinous Powers.

“The first thing I can tell you is that the new Red Angel does not have a capital like a Sector or a Quadrant Lord would. Her powerbase is concentrated aboard the *Conqueror*. It used as some sort of military headquarters, royal court, and other functions, I guess.”

“It survived the Battle of the Tyrant Star.” The Ordo Malleus hadn’t been sure.

“Judging by the visions I had,” and this time the Living Saint made a genuine grimace, “the thing is more daemon than warship by now. As such it devoured several hulls to regenerate, including the former flagship of the Blood Muse. As a result, this disgusting pit of damnation has now an impaling theme, along with the blood pools and the arenas.”

“Two out of three I understand,” Odysseus remarked, “but the blood pools?”

“I think these are heretical indoctrination chambers. They allow them to keep away their newborn Traitor Astartes from the arenas in the first period of their transhuman life.”

That was extremely bad news.

“And of course, they stopped implanting Butcher’s Nails into the skulls of their elite.”

This wasn’t a surprise anymore, but it was still a confirmation Odysseus would have preferred to be wrong about.

“These were visions sent by the Red Angel’s Ruinous Power, I suppose.”

“Yes. The Ruinous Power of Change was far busier taunting me with the shipyards of the world they call Clar Karond. To be honest, I’m not really impressed, but it is possible that being aware of the Imperium’s shipbuilding capacities, I am privileged in that regard. They can build Eldar warships there nonetheless, albeit with a very small dry dock infrastructure for capital ships above Cruiser tonnage.”

“Why this visions in particular, in your opinion?”

“I took the title of Aeldari Empress, don’t forget.”

“True. But that still remains...” Odysseus didn’t have the right word on his tongue.

“Childish? A lamentable way of taunting me? Yes.” The golden-winged Angel rolled her eyes. “I failed to find the humour, at any rate. I was more worried about the nightmares Decay sent my way. The system that was known as the ‘Lathes’ has been completely taken over by the Dark Mechanicum factions sworn to the Red Cambion.”

The Living Saint was right; it was far more concerning. Khorne-worshipping Eldar were in short numbers anyway, so no matter how many hulls were built, the Calyx forces still had to crew them, and Odysseus seriously doubted Traitor Astartes would be invited aboard them to compensate for the lack of Eldar crews.

“They are truly building their Traitor equivalent of a Forge World.” His peers of the Ordo Malleus had been worried about it when he met them in several secret Councils at Ultramar.”Do they still call themselves the ‘Archaeologists’?”

“Yes.”

A new cup of tea – the old Lord Inquisitor acknowledged the blue-white set had been purchased in the home system of the Ultramarines – was very much welcome.

“And the Fourth?”

“Anarchy was very much busy showing me systems where the greenskins battle heretics.” The Lady General Militant admitted. “Not very useful by itself, as most of the Granithor brutes are dead or left shortly after the Second Battle of the Tyrant Star, but it confirms that the Orks consider some planets holy ground where they can wage hostilities for as long as they like, and they don’t care about the influence of the Ruinous Powers.”

“How sad for them,” Odysseus commented with a total lack of sympathy.

“The Traitor forces are going to be able to rebuild their cadre of veterans which was decimated by the King in Yellow.” His host warned him. “And I don’t think in the end the greenskins can represent a problem for more than a few decades. The green WAAGH are disorganised and lack a powerful leader. But it will give us time. And each world the Traitors and their auxiliaries battle upon is critical, because given the sheer scale of the destruction which happened recently, the Calyx Hell Stars don’t have a lot of good strongholds that the *Conqueror* can use to muster a new Blood Crusade.”

“And the ‘realm’ seized is far smaller than the Ruinous Powers wanted.” The name of the Calyx Hell Stars was apt, but the borders drawn by the corrupted Noctilith of the Khornates didn’t include most of the region, and the Inquisition had been able to contain the problem with Guard and ex-Frateris Templars assistance. “Speaking of auxiliaries, I take it some of the Tau are involved in the battles?”

“They are present, though in most visions I was able to study, they are used as a sort of strategic reserve.” Lady Weaver shrugged. “They don’t have much left in common with the Tau I met so far. With their daemonic-shaped helmets and their Impaler-type weapons, they are very much a traitor counterpart to the Tempestus Scions.”

“Except the Scions don’t field Battlesuits.” Odysseus noted drily.

“Except that,” the Living Saint agreed. “But I think-“

The sentence was interrupted, but reassuringly, a happy expression blossomed on her face.

There was a brief sensation of being directionless, of their surroundings being suddenly far safer...and suddenly the Battleship had left the Warp.

“I am back home.”

**Nyx System**

**Battleship *Enterprise***

**2.501.312M35**

**Lady General Militant Taylor Hebert**

There was something reassuring about contemplating Blue Anchorage for several minutes.

No matter how powerful you were, the enormous Blue Giant also known as Nyx Sextus was still there, making you as insignificant as the first day you saw it.

Taylor sighed when Kratos cleared loudly his throat, partially ruining the moment.

“Yes, Gamaliel?”

“My Lady, I believe Kratos has something to speak.”

“I know,” the insect-mistress grinned. “That’s why he’s going to wait for several seconds. Every ship of the fleet has arrived?”

“Every ship has safely completed translation out of the Warp, yes.” The Blood Angel nodded. “One thousand, two hundred and eighty-seven ships, all safely returned from Macragge. The Pylons are really changing Warp travel as we know it.”

“They may never be enough of them to deploy for single squadrons, never mind lone ships.” Taylor smiled. “But having one for an entire Battle Group is more than sufficient to change the course of an entire campaign.”

From the moment the Heresy broke out to the thirty-fifth millennium, it was hard to not notice that in thousands upon thousands of Crusades and operations waged into enemy territory, the Imperium had kept losing warships to the malevolence of the Warp. Sometimes it was one or two ship per year on a specific front. In darker times, two or three flotillas disappeared and were never seen again.

“Of course, we still are far from making it a common asset for Crusades and other important campaigns. Present my compliments to Chancellor Achelieux, please. Pylon or not, this was still a remarkable navigation performance.”

Taylor counted up to twenty, slowly, and then acknowledged the inevitable.

“Yes, Kratos?”

“I wanted to say that your second wife is on her way.”

Now with the benefit of hindsight, Taylor knew that the decision to make the Flesh Tearer wait before speaking was very much the right one.

“Marianne is not my second wife.”

“Only because no vows were exchanged...”

Taylor’s hearing was beyond human now, but even then, she was unable to say for certain who had just spoken.

“Someone,” the black-haired parahuman mused, “really want to volunteer for these funny exercises against my Swarm. You know, the ones where I gather most of my Swarm and you are vanquished in the end no matter what you try.”

Taylor paused before smirking.

“Still, I am a very merciful woman.”

“As thousands of Tyranids, Word Bearers, and Necrons can vouch for, my Lady,” Gamaliel said gravely, completely ruining the effect in mere seconds.

Taylor groaned.

“I will pit each and every one of you against Bellona.” The insect-mistress promised. “You are not going to have fun, believed me. She learned a lot watching the Queen of Blades.”

Of course, this didn’t work on Kratos and the most bloodthirsty Space Marines.

Fighting a giant arachnid was very much like their idea of fun, even if Blue Bacta had to be used in the aftermath.

“Can you feel them, my Lady?”

“Gamaliel?”

“Your Adjutant-Spiders, my Lady. Can you give them orders from that distance?”

Taylor closed her eyes and focused.

Twelve spider-lights danced in front of her, as her power rejoiced and sang a beautiful melody of Light and Sacrifice.

“No. I can feel them at this distance. Giving them orders or controlling them like I am next door? Not a chance.”

“Do you hear that, Kratos? We are still going to be in the middle of great battles!”

This time the culprit was known, and the Black Templar was going to enjoy a big punishment for his effrontery.

“Now it has been proven you can’t speak seriously for a minute, what about contacting the kitchens and see what is on the menu? One of my Adjutants is busy enjoying delicious food at Nyx, and I am of the mind to imitate them with my guests.”

“Your second wife, you mean, my Lady.”

“Gamaliel, double the punishment of Kratos. And make it sure it doesn’t involve any fighting.”

“Maybe attending infiltration duties with Pierre, my Lady?”

“That’s cruelty!” A suddenly far less confident Flesh Tearer protested.

Taylor chuckled.

“An excellent suggestion, thank you.”

**Nyx**

**Hive Athena**

**Syntagma Square**

**Thessala Bar-Restaurant**

**Naxos Creed**

They said that Hive Athena never slept.

Naxos had seen many grand festivities last all night, and he could confirm there was some justice to it.

That said, everyone needed to sleep. And in the middle of the week, the majority of the citizens were joyously snoring in their beds.

If there was any need to confirm it, Syntagma Square and the nearby streets were near-empty. And this despite the fact there were two big hab-blocks where a lot of Ministry employees worked. Most of the days, they had queues in front of them. But those were no longer seen several hours past sunset. There were still a few servo-owls flying over his head, but it was a slow trickle at best.

Naxos gritted his teeth. One more day where his job-hunting had registered nothing but failure.

And it was way too late – or too early – to go to Grand Central and catch up a train. Night trains existed everywhere on Moira, but you didn’t use one without reservation and spending a lot of Gelts. It was easily three times cheaper to take a day train, and Naxos didn’t have big pockets.

He would have to wait, and the establishment was still open, like a lot of Syntagma bars...Thessala, uh? Well, it wouldn’t hurt to have a sandwich and a glass of juice fruit. Naxos loved the new sandwiches.

The Thessala Bar-Restaurant was not the kind of thing young men like him went in the middle of the day. There was some decoration in Amazonian wood, and some Colorado marble. The soft music was very much the kind of thing nobles loved to listen to. It wasn’t the chorus songs many famous singers and millions of spectators gathered for at Hive Trinity.

Naxos descended the stairs, and searched for the employee, wondering if the soft lights meant-

The young Nyxian had turned the corner and was now in the illuminated room.

He froze.

Naxos was sure nobody would have blamed him, because there was a gigantic spider comfortably installed at a table!

“Don’t stay like a sting-beetle hit you!”

“Err...” Naxos wasn’t able to find the correct words.

“Early riser?”

“No,” the young man found at last the strength to shake off the surprise. “I mean, I didn’t go to bed. I just wanted-“

“A meal? Then you’ve come to the right place! I was finishing my shift, and I am in need of company!”

 Naxos had heard of the great ‘Adjutant-Spiders’, of course. There were certainly the second holiest animals of Nyx, since Lisa and all the Titan-Moths were standing above them, according to the Priests. Many were seen regularly on the news and in different hololithic displays.

But he had never seen one in the flesh, and they were...this one was bloody huge!

“I wouldn’t want to cause problems, I’m sure-“

“If there is any problem, it is the lack of company!” the giant arachnid grumbled. “Not that it is the fault of this great establishment, of course. Some sanctimonious fraudsters are to blame. They made me work overtime. But I caught them. And now I lack company in my favourite establishment. Now sit. I will pay your meal in exchange for the conversation.”

“You...but you don’t even know it is going to cost!”

“You realise,” the insect servant of the Basileia replied, “that this is my second ‘Super-Gourmet Menu’ that I am enjoying? Furthermore, I am certain that the Webmistress is not going to blame me for adding a few Throne Gelts to the bill. I am pretty certain we were supposed to listen to her subjects, and my investigations devoured a lot of my free time recently!”

Naxos was a bit reassured by the arrival of the waitress, which assured him something like that was relatively normal. Epona – for the Adjutant-Spider’s was answering to this name – was well-known here, and loved to invite Nyxians randomly to her table.

It was very good luck, because the food was absolutely delicious. The holy spider shared the same view, clearly, because the huge plate in front of her was soon empty, and another replaced it, this one visibly presenting a salad of yellow-coloured fruits, surrounded by ice cream.

“Praise the Webmistress for giving me the authorisation to taste those marvellous sweets once per two weeks!” Epona voiced before focusing several eyes in his direction. “What kept you so long at night, if it is not too indulging my curiosity, Naxos?”

“Job-hunting,” he answered honestly, now that his belly was beginning to be filled satisfyingly.

“A principled quest,” Epona did the spider-equivalent of a nod. “And how is it going?”

“Not well,” Naxos admitted. “I failed Tech-College in first year I’m afraid. My parents insisted I needed a job, so I took an oath and joined the PDF.”

“Judging by your accent and the hornet tattoo on your arm, certainly the 1503rd Regiment, based in Cartel Hive.”

Naxos gaped.

“How did you...do Adjutant-Spiders know everything?”

“No! But I conducted an inspection of the PDF regiments there a month ago. But where I am my manners? I interrupted you, please continue.”

“Not much else to say,” he said trying to keep his unhappiness out of his tone. “I served two years, but my Sergeant saw that I was unhappy, and there are many volunteers for the mechanised infantry. I went job-hunting, but Cartel Hive is not exactly good if you can’t present a Tech or Economic Diploma from a College. And I can’t.”

“You could try Tech-College again,” Epona the Adjutant told him gently. “The Webmistress allowed every student to have two chances!”

“The problem,” Naxos hesitated, then decided that since Epona was paying for the delicious meal, she deserved his honesty. “The problem is that I can’t exactly say it will change anything. I didn’t have the skills to succeed in Tech-College. There are many things we were supposed to take for granted at the first lesson. I know College is just giving us the basics to be under Tech-Priest’s supervision, I really do...but there are too many things I don’t know. And our teachers can’t exactly give us time to catch up.”

“They can’t.” The ice cream was attacked with celerity, and then came the turns of the fruit. “This is a problem which returns quite often on the data-slates these days, unfortunately.”

“Really? You aren’t saying that because, well-“

“Webmistress be my witness, no!” The maw opened to swallow more fruits before speech resumed. “It is not exactly a state secret Nyx’s education system is incomplete and inefficient. The Webmistress wanted a deep reform, but the Adeptus Administratum of beyond the Quadrant, swimming in its usual incompetence, decided to block the efforts. But now that we don’t care of the grox’s opinion anymore, we may soon be able to open preparation to schools to ensure coming generations aren’t disarmed facing College. I mean, sending you with incomplete foundational knowledge to College is much like sending an Ultramar Auxilia soldier to fight a Carnifex. It tends to end in failure and you knew it before it began.”

“I am glad to hear that,” Naxos answered. “But I suppose reforms are going to take years.”

“Most probably,” Epona admitted before finishing the contents of her plate with sounds of delight. “The Webmistress wins quickly, the cogs of the Imperial bureaucracy are slow compared to her. There are more job openings in great numbers these days. The formation sessions of Agri-Hive Ceres are about to begin in two months.”

Naxos had heard of that, yes. There was just a slight problem...

“Once we’ve ended our formation, the Cartels waiting at the door demands *flexibility*.” And if he said the word like a curse, it was because it was one. “And since no new Agri-Hive was built, that means-“

“WEBMISTRESS! YOU ARE BACK!”

The shout really deafened him for a few seconds.

“Oh, sorry, Naxos,” Epona apologised immediately. “I was too enthusiastic. But-“

“Don’t worry, I will keep the secret.” He promised.

“This is not really a secret!” the Adjutant-Spider protested, before catching his astonished expression. “Fine, it is one, but only for a few hours. The fleet has arrived, everyone will know of it by dawn. And we Adjutants are going to be so busy organising the parades and the festivities in the Webmistress’ honour.”

A prospect that, clearly, was giving limitless joy to the big spider.

“Anyway, I think there are many jobs which you could find useful at Hive Ceres! Think about it! And please send me a letter telling me if it worked! I love having correspondence waiting for me at Thessala!”

‘Spidery Enthusiasm’ was contagious, and Naxos promised to do so.

**Between Nyx Quartus and Nyx Tertius**

**Battleship *Enterprise***

**2.504.312M35**

**Sergeant Gavreel Forcas**

Few men and women had been authorised to come aboard the Enterprise since it arrived in the Nyx System. This was not for lack of volunteers, quite the contrary.

Honestly, Gavreel thought that if they authorised everyone who wanted to come pay his respects to their Lady, they would not arrive to Nyx Tertius until next year.

Naturally, there were a few exceptions.

And some of them were more dangerous than the others.

Two landers opened, and two beings that any Space Marine could recognise to be a threat came out.

One was as big as a Jaghatai Battle-Tank, and the other was barely two metres-tall.

There was no question in Gavreel’s mind which was the most dangerous threat.

“Webmistress! I am so sorry I wasn’t able to protect your beautiful Arena!”

Adjutant-Colonel Bellona, resplendent golden arachnid, looked very much like she needed to be comforted.

Fortunately, it was nothing that some generous petting could solve.

“I’m sorry, Webmistress! I did everything I could, and it wasn’t enough!”

“Don’t worry, Bellona. The Adeptus Mechanicus is working on new plans. Many Magi think the solution is to build new types of modular structures we will be able to detach from the Arena itself when the Queen of Blades pays us a new destructive visit. It will be expensive in terms of engineering, but we will only have to rebuild the central part, and the artworks will be preserved.”

“You are the best, Webmistress!”

Gavreel tried not to snicker. He was successful. Unlike some many others of the Dawnbreaker Guard, who were coughing or trying to be as silent as possible with their reactions of hilarity...and failing monumentally.

After several more minutes of petting, Bellona went on take her place next to Artemis.

And though their attention had not diminished in the least, this time they doubled up when it came to vigilance.

The threat was just *that* dangerous.

“You look in good health.”

“I heal fast, my Empress.”

“As long as you are given enough blood to erase your wounds.”

“I have spent enough time playing the Crone before the Fall.”

The starry eyes fixed the threat emotionlessly.

Then reality seemed to shake.

There was a single word.

“**Kneel**.”

The long-ear female was a terrible presence. You could see it in her eyes. You could taste it in the air with every step she took. You could dread it as you contemplated the elegant flower-themed armour, which looked too close to the one used by the old monster at Commorragh to be a coincidence.

The golden-skinned, red-haired Eldar knelt without hesitation.

“My Empress.”

“This is forever, Liandra of Caledor. And this is a Path of **Sacrifice**.”

“I know.”

The Low Gothic was spoken flawlessly, but with a voice which made human excellence look limited and inexperienced.

“I have many duties in the coming hours, and I am not going to let you walk my side for now. Is there something my Adjutant didn’t notice or wasn’t made aware of?”

“One thing,” the long-ear female said. “I can’t ascertain it with great confidence, but I think the Lord of Skulls let me go so easily was because my enslavement allowed its essence to copy my Haemokinesis skills and my knowledge of Demigod-forging.”

Gavreel was sure he missed half of the context, and he still didn’t like the implications.

“And they say that out of the Four, the Ruinous Power of War is the least subtle and cunning.” His Lady snorted. “Yes, this would fit what I saw. What use are the old servants, if there is a new one that can perform better on the battlefield? Especially one which isn’t turned into a mad beast or filled with regrets?”

The golden armoured fingers seized the hand of the xenos, and helped her stand once more.

Everything was fluid and deadly.

It was as if two apex predators stared at each other.

“Will I get a suite as beautiful as the Queen enjoyed during her stay at the Arena?”

“No.” This time, Gavreel could definitely say the tone was smug. And a couple of seconds later, it was accompanied by a smirk. “You will be escorted by two of my Adjutant-Spiders. They will lead you to your quarters.”

“Not your personal Palace? I could serve you in incredible ways, my Empress.”

Was there something wrong with long-ears, or were they just attracted to the people who could kill them by the millions?

“I have no doubt, but if you don’t want the Queen of Blades to come back for a second unique performance where you would figure explosively, you will stay away from my bedroom.”

“As long as it is your desire, my Empress.”

Gavreel sighed. What was it with the Eldar and their total lack of self-preservation?