

# Enmity's Edge

By Elliot Hamer

The Land Raider convoy reached a halt, fresh snow falling from their hulls as they came to rest. Their forest green livery would ordinarily be a heartening sight to the Astra Militarum forces gathered before them, but the harsh brutality of war on the ice world of Rimenok meant that there was little jubilation at their arrival. Motors stood idle as the assault ramp of the lead vehicle lowered, its interior light illuminating the late gloom, and out strode Lazarus and his fellow Angels of Death.

The Imperial Guardsmen were despondent, the whites of their eyes showing a regiment close to breaking point. They were taking what little cover they could find in bombed-out ruins, huddled around flame burners in a pitiful effort to escape the biting cold and indiscriminate psy-bombardments.

'Colonel Barchus, Rimenok 31st Ice Warriors,' the Astra Militarum officer gave a shaky salute. 'The prism stands. We've gone through eighty percent of our artillery stockpile, and even had two Marauder runs on it. Each time it's swallowed our warheads whole. Ate 'em up and carried on flickering. We're just about out of ideas, sir, and these Emperor-damned psy-bombardments have us at our wits' end.'

Lazarus turned his sights to the prism. Across the plateau, an immaterial prismatic spectrum stood in the centre of the enemy's line. The size of a Warlord Titan, endless strands of colour flowed from pinnacle to base, its patterns both seamless and sickening all at once. At its tip, a small but similarly coloured sphere was rolling in suspension. Even as Lazarus evaluated it, its rotations grew faster and faster, the shimmering colours a haze of confusion to his mind. There was a commotion on the parapet as the Ice Warriors ran for cover.

'Eyes down!'

The sphere cast off, cannonading itself through the air at high velocity and making impact fifty metres from Lazarus' position. A kaleidoscopic detonation erupted, firing off retina-searing waves of warp energy in all directions. Those in the blast zone fell to the floor in agony, whilst those who did not avert their gaze, or have their vision shielded behind a helmet of power armour, were similarly afflicted. Guardsmen curled up on the ground, their heads swelling to bursting point as their senses were overloaded. Frenzied eyes became bulbous with stimulation, until a wet pop showered the ground

with their contents. Viscous fluid leaked from their ears, noses and now empty eye sockets, an effluence of blood and brains that was accompanied by the harrowing screams of the dying. Commissars drew their bolt pistols, not for the first time that day, and walked the parapet delivering the Emperor's Peace.

Librarian Ithurial's brow was heavy with concern. 'What is it, brother?' Lazarus asked, turning to him.

'This is unlike anything I've witnessed before,' the Librarian responded. 'The prism must fall, but if it's impervious to arms fire...' The Librarian trailed off in thought. Lazarus gave him time; in his experience, the right strategy wasn't one found on impulse.

'Its appearance is too sudden to be the consequence of a ritual or warp incursion,' Ithurial continued, 'I would have sensed it earlier if so. It must have a more localised cause... an artefact perhaps, or a powerful psyker.'

Lazarus' mind worked over an amassment of details and possibilities. As he processed his plan, the prism continuing to flicker. Another sphere had manifested at the pinnacle, smaller than the last, but slowly growing with each variegated rotation.

'If it's an artefact, can you contain it?' he asked Ithurial.

'Yes. It is powerful, so I might not be able to shut it down completely, but I can smother its effects long enough for the rest of the Librarius to lend aid.'

'Good,' Lazarus replied, 'because if it's a psyker, I can kill it.'

Lazarus opened a channel-wide vox. 'All forces, this is Master Lazarus. Prepare to commence spearhead assault. I want every available gun covering our advance. An evil has rooted itself in Rimenok, and we will cut it out.'

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At the tip of the spear, *Ardent Advance* – Lazarus' Land Raider Crusader – carved a path across the frozen plateau, snow drifts and boulders smashed aside by its implacable offense. A staccato of projectile impacts sounded across its hull as the small arms fire of the enemy bounced off its armoured plating. Hundreds of rounds were shot back in return

as the vehicle's hurricane bolters and assault cannons tore mutants, Beastmen and cultists asunder. To its rear, Predator squadrons, Devastator Squads and battle tanks of the Rimenok 19th Heavy Armour bombarded the enemy.

Massed packs of Daemon Engines spat back blasts of ectoplasma and let off salvoes with their hades autocannons that seared and rent the transports of the advancing Dark Angels. The survivors pulled themselves clear of the wreckage only to be brought low by the hateful volleys of the heretics.

*The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Imperium,*  
Lazarus thought to himself.

'Thirty seconds out.'

His command squad drew their weapons and Ithuriel focused his mind for the psychic battle ahead. They knew not the outcome of a close assault on the prism, but doubt was not their way. They would follow Lazarus into the Great Rift itself without a word uttered, and cast it back with bolt, blade and indignation.

'Twenty seconds.'

A large projectile scored a penetrating hit. The hurricane bolter's sponson was torn off and one half of its magazine ignited. Four warriors went down in the explosion.

'Ten seconds.'

Another hit jolted them forward, a lascannon blast that seared a hole through the drive bay. The driver was a bloody mess, but he clinged to life to fulfil his duty. He hit the mechanism to deploy the Crusader's assault ramp and aimed straight for the prism.

'Disembark.'

Lazarus ran down the ramp and into the heart of madness.

Stepping through the prismatic barrier, his charge was stalled by an ominous weight upon his psyche. His senses began to desert him; the stimuli was there, yet his mind could not process it. Every step was an exertion, every breath a labour of effort. He was aware, yet felt powerless to compel his body to react.

Lazarus surveyed his surroundings. At the centre of the prism stood a Sorcerer of the Thousand Sons, his arms raised and waves of colour flowing through his form. Ithuriel had been right.

'I am a vessel of the Emperor's vengeance,' spat Lazarus, forcing his way forward through the relentless waves of psychic force, but every step became harder than the last. The synapses in his brain were shutting down, his body refusing to respond to mental commands. All about him, those that had survived the armoured rush were similarly afflicted. Many had fallen, their forms deathly still on the icy floor. Brother Ithuriel was on one knee, showing the strain of a mind waging war on a different plain.

Lazarus raised his bolt pistol. 'I am his wroth made manifest.' He unloaded his magazine at his enemy, the strain of the act pulling most of his shots wide. Any that found their mark bounced harmlessly off ceramite armour. What was once second nature was now an exercise in futility.

The Sorcerer glanced over at Lazarus, a contemptuous gaze and disdainful scoff his only reply before his vision returned to the prism and his ritual continued.

Lazarus dropped to one knee, his life force breaking down under the psychic onslaught. He screamed at his mind and body to respond with the one last kernel of resistance within him that would not give in.

Mere meters away, Ithuriel was fatally succumbing to a greater psyker. Lazarus felt his brother reach into his mind and infuse his last vestiges of strength into him. The defiance that powered Lazarus was stoked, an ember of fury that would not be extinguished, and a blaze of righteous repugnance was set. As Ithuriel's duty came to an end, Lazarus was rejuvenated.

'Through my deeds, his will be done,' Lazarus vowed as he rose up to his feet, lifting his sword above his head in an indomitable redoubt against the psychic torrent. All that he had left was summoned as he hurled the blade through the air. It flew, its energised edge alight with Lazarus' loathing, and found its mark.

Lazarus' sword cut through ceramite and buried itself to the hilt in his enemy's chest. The Sorcerer fell to



his knees in shock, the prism contracting as his arms fell to his sides. His head lulled onto his breastplate as hot blood fell to the frozen ground, and tendrils of steam curled upwards around his fallen form.

The prism exploded, throwing polychromatic discharge across the battlefield that reflected off the white of the ice. Hundreds of warriors fell in agony. Lazarus was thrown back by the blast, and his world went black.

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Lazarus stirred himself from the memory. It was one he visited frequently, for he struggled to come to terms with the disaster at Rimenok. Had his assault been a timely intervention, or had he been responsible for hundreds of avoidable deaths? This became a facet of his past that burned as hot as his Belisarian Furnace. Both of those fires now defined him – one had saved him, the other had lit a seething hatred for the evils of sorcery.

The wounds he sustained from the explosion had been so grievous that all hope was lost. Not even entombment within the sarcophagus of a dreadnought would have been enough to preserve his life. The fifth company Apothecary, however, had other ideas. He had proposed that, in order to save Master Lazarus, the Company Master must cross the Rubicon Primaris.

All knew that fording the Rubicon was a perilous task, one in which death was a common end. Considering Lazarus' wounds were dire beyond compare, his chances of survival were slim to none. Nonetheless, the Apothecary would not to be denied. He had argued Lazarus' stubborn determination would carry him across.

Conducting the procedure himself, the Apothecary had shepherded the Company Master across the Rubicon and into his new form. Once ignited, the Belisarian Furnace had kept Lazarus alive for the lengthy treatments to his fallen body to be completed.

He had emerged as a Primaris Space Marine.

This was a significant step for the Dark Angels, for none could now say 'colours doth not a Dark Angel make' of all their Primaris brethren. Though his body was new, he was still the Lazarus that had risen through the ranks with a steadfast spirit, and an unwavering devotion to the Chapter.

He raised his head and looked around at the gathering. Trusted brothers, their forms hidden

behind ceremonial robes, had taken their position to complete this Inner Circle. Interspersed between them were stacked candles, their flickering light illuminating damaged stonework, bullet holes and scorch marks on the gothic architecture of the sanctum. Marbas' siege of the Rock was another bitter memory, one that all Dark Angels now carried with them.

'Brothers,' began Supreme Grand Master Azrael, 'disturbing portents have reached us from the sons of Titan. Visions of a winged monarch upon a devastated world reborn. The Crimson King and his legions of sorcerers are gathering. We know little of why, or what they aim to achieve, but the Grey Knights have requested our aid, and we will heed their call.'

'Master Lazarus will lead the assault. Knight Master Inias and Huntmaster Estrael will support with the first and second company. You will be commencing this campaign with little established intelligence, so trust your instincts and be wary of all else. Need I remind you of the last time we engaged heretics and sorcerers on this scale?'

With his orders delivered, Azrael stepped forward into the circle.

'I am indebted to you all for the trust you place in me, as I can see that many here guard an unspoken objection. Cryptic visions and an unidentified threat. Why would we commit our forces so blind, and fight side-by-side with allies capable of uncovering our darkest secrets? To that, I say this. Look around; see what has become of our great Chapter. Many a brother is missing from this circle, cut down in Stygius or lost to the Great Rift, their memory all that is left for us to venerate them by. The Rock itself is gravely wounded, our sanctuary crumbling and our sanctums sacked. We are slowly bleeding out, fighting a reactionary war against an ever changing enemy.'

The Grand Master turned to an archway, the burning candles at its base casting a lengthy shadow across the sanctum. He inspected the damaged stonework, seemingly weighing up his next words carefully.

'Our deepest sanctuaries have been breached and our secrets have been pilfered. What we have guarded so closely for thousands of years is abroad, snatched from these very halls by the Great Enemy. The truths learnt by those vile abominations are being woven into a tapestry of heinous lies. Even the sons of Titan themselves could have gleaned truths from our dark history.'



Wide eyes stared at Azrael. They were all members of the Inner Circle, but such candid words from their Grand Master had struck a chord. Azrael turned to face them once again, passion coming to the fore.

‘As our friends and enemies encircle us, we look upon fellow Dark Angels with distrust. Broken and bleeding, we reject those who have made oaths to our Chapter, some of whom are true sons of Caliban! Even amongst this most trusted gathering, a Master of our own stands as Primaris, his deeds enough to earn him a place within this circle, yet we still treat Primaris with inherent suspicion.’

Eyes danced over Lazarus this time. He knew of the hushed conversations in the alcoves of the Rock, of the mistrust that even members of this gathering held for their new brothers. He was now an undeniable example of the fallacy of that notion.

‘No longer shall we be on the defensive, allowing our enemies to manoeuvre around us. No longer shall we be idle on our hunt, oblivious to what secrets run free. We shall strike out, hunt with scent or no, and remind our enemies why we are the First. Kindle the fire that burns within you, nurture it into a searing fury, and bring down retribution upon Magnus and his sorcerous legions for the destitution they have brought upon our Chapter.’

Lazarus was returning to Stygius, the very theatre that now defined him. He gripped the hilt of his sword – they had recovered it with him, its crackling edge pure and free from the warp-taint that had infected all else that day.

He had renamed the blade Enmity’s Edge, and with it the Dark Angels would have their vengeance.

