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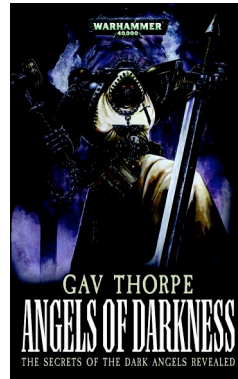
ANGELS OF DARKNESS

A Warhammer 40,000 novel

By Gav Thorpe

The Dark Angels Space Marines are amongst the most devout of the God-Emperor's servants. Their loyalty is beyond question and their faith almost fanatical. But the Chapter harbours a dark secret that stretches back over ten thousand years, to the time of the Horus Heresy. In this terrible time, the Space Marine Legions turned on each other in a blood bath that nearly tore the Imperium apart.

When Dark Angels Chaplain Boreas captures and interrogates one of the Fallen, the past collides with the future with tragic consequences. Gav Thorpe's classic Dark Angels novel is re-presented in a new edition, complete with an afterword by the author.



About the Author

Gav Thorpe worked for Games Workshop in his capacity as Senior Games Developer for many years, overseeing and contributing to the Warhammer and Warhammer 40,000 worlds. He has a dozen or so short stories to his name, and over half a dozen novels. He lives in Nottingham, UK.

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The following is an excerpt from *ANGELS OF DARKNESS* by Gav Thorpe.

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WITH THE WHINE of the shuttle's engines dying behind him, Astelan stood on the landing apron looking at the large, ornate gates in front of him. They were wrought from black metal in the design of a winged sword that was mirrored on each side.

In the dark, cavernous room beyond, he could see ten giant figures swathed in thick white robes. They were standing in the shadows between the guttering circles of flame cast by tall candles set around the chamber's walls. Each figure bore a two-handed sword, held upright across its chest and face, the sharp edges of the weapons glinting in the erratic light. The ruddy glow flickered off thousands of skulls adorning the walls and ceiling of the vast sepulchre, gleaming in eyeless sockets and shining off polished lipless grins. Many were human, but most were not: a mix of subtle, elongated features; brutal, bucket-jawed aliens; eyeless monstrosities; horned, twisted creatures and many other contorted, inhuman stares looked down upon the assembled Dark Angels.

The solitary toll of a bell brought the assembled guard to attention. The great gates in front of Astelan opened inwards, another clanging of the bell drowning out the hiss of hydraulics and creak of ancient hinges, and he took a few steps forward. Suited in his heavy black power armour, he was still taller by a few centimetres than the assembled Space Marines. He wore no helmet, and his dark eyes calmly gauged the gathered warriors from beneath a heavy brow, the candlelight reflecting off his shaved head. He looked back at the Space Marine who had accompanied him on the

shuttle, the one who had been referred to as Brother-Chaplain Boreas. He too wore heavy white robes, but unlike the honour guard, Boreas was still armoured. His face was concealed behind a helmet fashioned in the shape of a death's head skull, decorated by tarnished gilding. The dead eye-lenses of the helmet regarded him without emotion.

'I did not expect an honour guard,' Astelan said, glancing at the Dark Angels who stood unmoving around him.

'You were right not to, they are here to honour me, not you,' Boreas replied quietly and evenly, his tone slightly distorted by his suit's vocal projectors. He then raised his voice to address the others in the room. 'Form up for escort!'

Five of the Space Marines turned and took up position in front of Astelan, while the others fell in behind the newly arrived pair. At another command from Boreas, they started a slow march forwards. Astelan felt Boreas shove him from behind, and he fell into step behind the others. As they passed from the chamber into a wide but low corridor panelled with slabs engraved with names, Astelan felt a flicker of recognition.

'We just passed through the Memorial Gates, did we not?' he asked Boreas, who did not reply. 'I am sure. It all seems so familiar. The reception chamber used to be hung with banners of the families of Caliban whose lords had fallen in battle.'

'Perhaps once, but not any more,' Boreas conceded.

'But how can that be? I saw from the transport that this is not Caliban, it is some form of space station,' Astelan said. 'And the Memorial Gates were used to get to the tombs in the catacombs beneath the citadel. It was a place for the dead.'

'That is correct,' Boreas said.

Perturbed and confused, Astelan carried on in silence as the Dark Angels led him further and further into the bowels of the disturbing place. Their journey was lit by torches that burned with smokeless flame, held in sconces at regular intervals along the walls. Other corridors branched left and right, and Astelan knew from memory that they were passing through the tombs of the ancient rulers of Caliban. And yet he could not reconcile the sight he had seen upon

his arrival with his memories. He was on an armoured fortress hanging in space – he had seen the many towers and emplacements built upon what he had taken to be a gigantic asteroid.

They turned left and right on occasion, weaving through the labyrinth of tunnels, surrounded by tablets proclaiming the names of Dark Angels who had died in heroic combat. They seemed to go on forever in all directions. Underfoot, the dust was thick, having lain undisturbed for many years, perhaps decades or centuries. Small alcoves set into the walls held relics of the past – ornately decorated shoulder pads, the hilt and half the blade of a broken power sword, engraved skulls, a tarnished gauntlet, glass-fronted ossuaries displaying the bones of those who had fallen in battle, a plaque beneath declaring who they were in life. He felt draughts and chill breezes on his face emanating from side chambers, and occasionally heard a distant sigh, or the clank of a chain, all of which added to the macabre aura of the crypt, which did little to ease Astelan's unsettled mind.

Turning right at one particular junction, a peripheral movement caught Astelan's eye and he glanced to his left. In the shadows he saw a diminutive being, no higher than his waist, almost hidden in the darkness. It was little more than a small robe, but from the depths of the black hood two eyes glittered with a cold, blue light as the strange creature regarded Astelan. As suddenly as he had spotted it, the watcher in the dark faded back into the shadows and was gone.

His confusion growing as they continued to march into the bowels of the sepulchre, it took Astelan a moment to realise that they had stopped. The other Dark Angels turned and filed out by the way they had entered, leaving him and Boreas in a circular chamber roughly two dozen metres across, its circumference lined with windowless iron doors. All of the doors were closed except one, and Boreas directed Astelan towards it with a pointing finger.

Astelan hesitated for a moment and then strode forwards into the room beyond. He stopped suddenly as soon as he entered, stunned by what he found inside.

The room was not large, barely five metres square, lit by a brazier in the far corner. A stone slab dominated the centre of the room, pierced by iron rings from which hung heavy chains, and to one side a row of shelves was stacked with various metal implements that menacingly caught the light of the glowing coals. There were two more robed Space Marines awaiting them, their faces hidden by heavy hoods, their hands concealed beneath studded metal gauntlets. As one took a step forward, Astelan caught a glimpse of bony white under his hood.

The door slammed shut behind Astelan and he turned to see Boreas had stepped inside. The Chaplain removed his skull-faced helmet and held it under his arm. His piercing eyes regarded Astelan just as coldly as the flat features of the armoured skull had done. Like Astelan, his head was also shaven and marked with faint scars. His left cheek was tattooed with a winged sword, Chapter symbol of the Dark Angels, and his forehead pierced with service studs.

‘You are charged as a traitor to the Emperor and Lion El’Jonson, and I, as an Interrogator-Chaplain of the Dark Angels Chapter, am here to administer your salvation,’ Boreas intoned. Astelan laughed harshly at the man’s overly sombre tone, the sound echoing off the bare stone walls.

‘You shall be my saviour?’ snarled Astelan. ‘And what right do you have to judge me?’

‘Repent the sins of your past, accept the error of your Lutherite ways, and your salvation shall be swift,’ Boreas said, ignoring Astelan’s scorn.

‘And if I do not?’ asked Astelan.

‘Then your salvation shall be long and arduous,’ Boreas replied, pointedly glancing at the blades, tongs and brands on the shelf.

‘Has the glory of the Dark Angels been so forgotten that you are reduced to barbarian torturers?’ Astelan spat. ‘The Dark Angels are warriors, shining knights of battle. And yet, here you skulk in the shadows, turning upon your own.’

‘Do you not repent of your actions?’ Boreas asked again. His face was intent, and his voice was tinged with anger.

‘I have committed no wrong,’ Astelan replied. ‘I refuse to answer your charges, and I refuse to acknowledge your right to accuse me thus.’

‘Very well, then we shall endeavour to relieve you of the burden on your soul,’ Boreas stated with another glance at his torturer’s instruments. ‘If you will not repent freely and earn a swift death, then we must exorcise the sin from your soul with pain and misery. The choice is yours.’

‘There is not one here amongst you who could lighten the weight I have borne upon my shoulders,’ Astelan declared. ‘And there is not one in this room who shall lay a finger upon me without violence.’

‘That is but the latest error of judgment you have made.’ Boreas smiled grimly and gestured to one of the other Dark Angels. ‘Brother-Librarian Samiel shall set you right.’

The Space Marine pulled back his hood to reveal a dark, weathered face. Tattooed above his right eye was the winged sword symbol, its pommel in the shape of a glaring eye. His head was also shaven to the scalp, and criss-crossed with scars and branding marks. There was movement in Samiel’s eyes, and it took a moment for Astelan to realise that they were tiny sparks of psychic power.

Astelan took a step towards Boreas, fists raised to attack.

‘Arcanatum energis!’ Samiel spat. Blue bolts of lightning leapt from the psyker’s fingertips and struck Astelan full in the chest, hurling him across the room to slam into the wall. Ancient stone cracked and splintered under the impact and Astelan grimaced with pain from the blow. Flickers of blue sparks danced over his armour for a few more heartbeats as he pushed himself to his feet.

‘You call me traitor, you who have brought a witch into your own ranks!’ Astelan growled between gritted teeth, staring with loathing at Boreas.

‘Be still!’ Samiel barked, his voice cutting into Astelan’s mind, hammering at his senses as much as the psychic bolt had hammered into his body. He resisted for only the briefest of moments before he felt the strength sapped from his limbs and he slumped within his armour, its servos whining to keep him upright.

‘Sleep!’ Samiel exerted his will again, and this time Astelan’s resistance was stronger and he fought off the urge to close his eyes for several seconds. His gaze caught that of the Librarian, and in that moment, the full force of the psyker’s mind was unleashed. Astelan felt his own thoughts being twisted into a whirl, his vision spun and a roaring filled his ears. He tried desperately to shake himself free of Samiel’s burning gaze, but could not move. His attention was locked and he felt his will draining away, leeching into the witchfires that burned in the psyker’s eyes.

‘Sleep...’ Samiel repeated and Astelan fell into unconsciousness.

WHEN HE AWOKE, Astelan was not surprised to find himself chained to the interrogation slab. Looking at the thick links of iron binding his legs and arms, he knew instantly that even with his prodigiously enhanced strength he would have little chance of breaking his bonds. He had been stripped of his armour, and he lay naked upon the stone table. His skin was tight across his corded muscles, marked by dozens of surgery scars where he had undergone his transformation into a Space Marine. Across his chest and abdomen a second skin glistened a dull black, broken in places by steel fittings for wires and cables, which allowed him to interact with his power armour when armed for battle. Now the metal sockets and circuits lay dormant, and his body felt cold where they pierced his flesh.

Glancing around the room, Astelan found himself alone. He wondered how long it would be before his torturers arrived. It mattered not, he knew well that he could block out whatever pain they dared visit upon him. Pain was a weakness, and as a Space Marine of the Dark Angels, he had no weaknesses. He reminded himself, as he lay there waiting, that he had suffered many wounds in battle and had continued to fight on. Even now, fettered in the prison of those who had forsaken the heritage he had left them, he would continue that fight.

Others had warned him that the Dark Angels were not as they had always been, that they were now ruled by suspicion and secrecy, but he had not truly believed them. Had he realised what they intended, he would never have surrendered himself to them on

Tharsis. He had spent the last few weeks in a state of constant turmoil. First, the Dark Angels had attacked the world he had commanded, forcing him to fight back. It was only after considerable bloodshed that, against the advice of his subordinates, Astelan had relented in his defiance and allowed his attackers entry to his bunker.

The first Space Marines he had seen had seemed very wary, and were confused. Soon they were recalled and the Chaplain, Boreas, had arrived, flanked by Space Marines in white heavy Terminator armour. The unconventional form of their livery and the barbaric decorations of bones and feathers had only added to Astelan's confusion, as had the term Boreas had used to describe them – the Deathwing. He had not resisted, in his ignorance, when they had manacled his hands with thick chains of titanium, so that even in his armour he could not break the links. A gunship, also in the colours of the Deathwing, had landed directly outside his command centre and as he was hurried on board he saw no sign of any other Space Marines.

From then on, he had been kept in total isolation. When he had been transferred from the gunship to a cell aboard the Dark Angels' vessel he had been hooded with a black sack, his mouth gagged with thick cord. He had received no contact other than when Boreas had introduced himself and brought him food and water. Astelan was unsure how long the journey had taken, several weeks at least, before Boreas had returned with the gag and the hood, and the shuttle had brought him to the hidden landing pad.

Now he was due to be tortured by those who falsely imprisoned him. He knew that in their ignorance they thought him a traitor, and in their own superstitious way they believed they were saving his soul. It was a mockery of everything he held dear, of everything the Dark Angels once represented to the galaxy. As his anger grew, Astelan resolved to show them the error of their ways, to demonstrate to them how far they had fallen from grace in the eyes of the Emperor.

While he waited, Astelan let himself fall into a trance, calming his mind. As he had been trained to do, he detached himself from his

physical body, allowing the catalepsean node implanted into the base of his brain to control his mental functions. In a partial slumber, he remained aware of his surroundings and alert to any threat, but his brain also rested itself, redirecting neural signals from dormant areas to those still awake.

In his dreamlike state, his perceptions shifted focus, so that the room became bright and full of colour for a few minutes, before turning stark and grey as his consciousness transferred through the different lobes of his brain. Sound came and went, memories flooded his mind and then were lost, and he felt as if he were floating in the air, swiftly followed by the crushing weight of the air pressure around him. Through all this, the inner eye of his mind watched the door, awaiting the return of his jailers.

ASTELAN WAS AWARE that a considerable time had passed, perhaps several hours, and he eased himself back into full consciousness. His augmented hearing picked up the sound of approaching footfalls from outside the room. It had been this that had pricked his subconscious mind, forcing him to return from his mesmerised state. With a rattle of heavy keys, the lock was turned with a loud clanking, and the door swung open. Boreas entered, followed by Samiel, and the Chaplain swung the door shut behind him. He had divested himself of his armour and now wore a plain white robe, its front opened to reveal the Space Marine's massively muscled chest.

Boreas turned and hung the keys on a hook by the door.

'I hope you used your time of solitary peace to consider your thoughts carefully,' Boreas began, standing to Astelan's right. Astelan watched Samiel circle the room to stand on the other side of him.

'Your threats are meaningless to me, surely even you can understand that,' Astelan replied, turning his head to meet Boreas's gaze.

'If you will not recant your evil deeds, we must proceed according to the ancient traditions of my office,' Boreas intoned, beginning the ritual of interrogation. 'Tell me your name.'

‘I am Chapter Commander Merir Astelan,’ he replied with a note of indignity in his voice. ‘Your treatment of me has taken no account of my esteemed rank.’

‘And who do you serve?’ Boreas asked.

‘I once served the Emperor’s Dark Angels Space Marine Legion,’ Astelan told the Chaplain, dropping his gaze to the floor.

‘Once served? Who do you serve now?’ Boreas demanded, stepping forward.

‘I was betrayed by my own lords,’ Astelan replied after a moment of painful recollection, still avoiding Boreas’s stare. ‘They turned their backs on me, but I have endeavoured to continue the great task that the Emperor created me for.’

‘And what is that great task?’ Boreas leaned close, his eyes narrowing as he glared at Astelan.

‘That mankind might rule the galaxy, without fear of threat from within or without,’ Astelan replied fiercely, meeting the Interrogator-Chaplain’s stare. ‘To fight proudly at the forefront of battle against the alien and the ignorant.’

‘And so how is it that you fought against the Space Marines of the Dark Angels on the world of Tharsis?’ Boreas asked.

‘Once more I was betrayed by the Dark Angels, and again I had to fight to defend myself and to protect what you would unwittingly destroy.’ Astelan raised his head to look straight at the Interrogator-Chaplain, and the Chaplain recognised the hatred in his eyes.

‘You enslaved a world to your own selfish whims and needs!’ Boreas spat, reaching down and clamping a hand around Astelan’s throat. The muscles in the prisoner’s neck corded as he fought back against the pressure of the Dark Angel’s powerful fingers. There was loathing in Boreas’s voice when he spoke next. ‘You betrayed everything you were sworn to uphold! Admit it!’

Astelan said nothing as the two gazed venomously at each other. For several minutes, they were locked together in their mutual disgust, until Boreas eventually eased his grip and stood back.

‘Tell me how you came to be on Tharsis,’ the Chaplain said, crossing his arms, acting as if he had not just been trying to squeeze

the life out of the man chained in front of him. Astelan took a few deep breaths to steady himself.

‘Tell me but one thing,’ Astelan said, glancing first at Boreas and then at Samiel. ‘Tell me where I am, how this place can be so familiar and yet so different, and I may consider listening to your accusations.’

‘Has he not yet worked it out?’ Samiel said, looking in amazement at Astelan. There was a flicker of a frown on the Chaplain’s face before he looked down at his prisoner.

‘You are in the Tower of Angels, renegade,’ Boreas said.

‘That cannot be so,’ protested Astelan, trying to sit up but raising his head only a little against the strength of the chains. ‘I saw nothing of Caliban when we approached. This cannot be our fortress. Why do you mock me?’

‘There is no mockery,’ Samiel said quietly. ‘This fortress is all that is left of our homeworld of Caliban.’

‘Lies!’ Astelan declared, trying to sit up, his muscles bulging as he fought against the chains. ‘This is just a trick!’

‘You know we speak the truth,’ Boreas said, forcing Astelan down again with a hand on his chest. His eyes bored into Astelan’s as he spoke his next words: ‘This is all that remains of Caliban, our homeworld that your treachery destroyed.’

ANGELS OF DARKNESS can be purchased in all better bookstores, Games Workshop and other hobby stores, or direct from this website and GW mail order.

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