

GAV THORPE

PATH OF THE SEER

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PATH OF THE SEER

Gav Thorpe

The ancient eldar are a mysterious race and each devotes their life to a chosen path that will guide their actions and decide their fate. Thirianna abandons her simple existence to embark upon the Path of the Seer. She will tread a dark and dangerous road that leads her to the other-realm of the warp, where daemons are made, flesh and nightmares are manifest, for only there can she realise her psychic abilities. After unleashing her powers in battle and communing with the spirits of her craftworld, Thirianna turns her skills to discerning the future amidst the myriad strands of fate. Her visions reveal a great threat descending upon Alaitoc, and both the living and the dead will march to war to defend it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gav Thorpe has been rampaging across the worlds of Warhammer and Warhammer 40,000 for many years as both an author and games developer. He hails from the den of scurvy outlaws called Nottingham and makes regular sorties to unleash bloodshed and mayhem. He shares his hideout with Dennis, a mechanical hamster sworn to enslave mankind. Dennis is currently trying to develop an iPhone app that will hypnotise his victims.

Gav's previous novels include fan-favourite *Angels of Darkness* and the epic *Malekith*, first instalment in the Sundering trilogy, amongst many others.

You can find his website at:

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IT TOOK THREE cycles until Thirianna had recovered sufficiently from her first experience of the skein to contact Kelamith. The farseer had been notably absent as Thirianna had rested in her new rooms, and had offered no explanation of what had happened to her. Thirianna considered the possibility that Kelamith had known what would happen, and had foreseen that she would regain her mental harmony in time, and chosen not to intervene.

Just that briefest glimpse of the skein had opened Thirianna's mind to the wondrous possibilities that lay before her. Rather than being fearful of approaching the infinity circuit again she was excited by the prospect. Yet it had taken three days of meditation and contemplation before she had been able to think of the skein without being dizzied by its power.

Midway through the fourth cycle after the episode, she received an invitation from Kelamith to join him in the gardens next to her chambers. He made it clear that the two of them would be venturing into the infinity circuit again, which set Thirianna's mind racing in all directions.

As she made her way down towards the parkland, her first thought was one of concern. What if she were incapable of interacting with the skein? What if she lacked the psychic power to deal with its infinite possibilities? She dismissed the idea as she reached the edge of the gardens. Kelamith had hinted that her mind's defences would be more of a hindrance than a help at this early stage; if he had any further worries over her suitability he would have voiced them or refused to become her mentor altogether. His lack of concern for her wellbeing led Thirianna to believe that what she had encountered, and her reaction, was commonplace.

Following the path up to the top of the rock hill, she wondered how many attempts it would take before she could interact with the infinity circuit. She was impatient, more than at any time in her life. She had a lifetime to perfect any art or skill she turned her mind to, but her desire to see what the future held for her propelled her forwards more swiftly than on any previous Path. It was possible, she concluded, that in her haste to comprehend the skein she was unwittingly stalling her development.

Kelamith stood beneath the branches of a tree near to the bench atop the hill. His eyes were free of witchlight and his expression was one of almost paternal pride, which confused Thirianna.

'Greetings, child,' said the farseer. Thirianna nodded her head in return and sat on the bench. 'I trust you feel restored and recuperated? You have not been unduly perturbed by your recent experience?'

'I am rested,' said Thirianna. She smiled at the farseer as he walked over to her and stopped in front of the bench. 'And I am eager to try again. I hope that with your guidance I will not fail this time.'

'Fail?' Confusion knotted Kelamith's brow. 'There was no failure. Not on your part, at least. I failed to divine the extent of your instinct and natural ability, and did not take suitable precautions for your safe-keeping.'

'I do not understand.'

The farseer sat beside Thirianna, closer than would normally be acceptable between recent acquaintances. Thirianna tried to ignore the intrusion into her personal space.

'You went further into the infinity circuit than I considered possible,' explained Kelamith. 'For most of us, our first steps upon the Path are tentative and short-lived. We see no more

than a fraction of the infinity circuit, and nothing of the great realm of which it is part. You, on your first attempt, looked upon the skein itself. The skein is a thing of wonder, but it cannot be seen without training and preparation.'

Thirianna tried not to look smug at the thought that she had done so well, but evidently failed. Kelamith's frown of confusion turned to one of annoyance.

'You have natural power but no control, child,' he said. 'Once the shackles have been loosed from our thoughts it is easy to look at the skein. The skill comes in understanding it; in seeing only a part and choosing a singular thread to follow. Any fool can look at the mass of the future, but a seer must separate the detail from the noise, the important from the unimportant.'

Kelamith stood up and waved for Thirianna to follow him.

'We will return to the infinity circuit and we will try again,' said the farseer. 'This time I want you to only peek at what can be seen.'

'And how do I do that?' Thirianna asked as they started down the hill.

'As a child we blinded you, and now that you have opened your eyes again the light burns them,' said Kelamith. 'I will teach you the means to open them only slightly and protect yourself from the harsh glare of the unbounded skein.'

As before, they made their way into the heart of Alaitoc, walking through the interlinked Chambers of the Seers until they came to the same room as before. The infinity circuit node rose from the floor at Kelamith's command and he indicated for Thirianna to approach it.

'Do you still remember the words?' he asked.

'I do,' replied Thirianna. The verses were etched into her thoughts as deeply as her poems had once been. Oddly, she realised, she could barely remember her compositions when once they had come to mind at the slightest thought. The destruction of the crystals had been mirrored by her memory.

'Concentrate on the sense of form,' said Kelamith. 'Retain a foundation within your form rather than letting your spirit free. Chain your mind with the reality of your being and the restrictions of form.'

Thirianna did not quite understand what the farseer meant, but she was eager to link with the infinity circuit again. This time when she placed her hand on the node, she tried to picture the way she had interacted with the infinity circuit countless times before, skimming across its surface without delving into it.

'That will not do,' said Kelamith, sensing her intent. 'You cannot simply look upon the infinity circuit, you must still become part of it, while keeping yourself detached.'

'That is a contradiction, surely?' said Thirianna.

'Remember: Mind, Being and Form,' said the farseer. 'Three intertwined parts of you, each separate and the same. If such concepts prove difficult, there is nothing I can do to help you.'

Nodding her submission to this logic, Thirianna took a breath and allowed herself to slip into the infinity circuit.

At first she did as she had planned, touching only lightly upon the huge matrix of psychic energy that ran through every part of Alaitoc. She allowed her thoughts to dance towards the distant rim, where ship manifests and passenger lists inhabited the frameworks of the docks; to the Pinnacle of Mornings, where a group of poets were reciting the *Epic of Eldanesh*; to the Dome of Crystal Seers; to the Arc of the Turning Suns.

She felt a presence beside her: Kelamith, not physically, but within the structure of the infinity circuit.

'Thirianna will delve a little deeper,' he said.

She felt warmth from his presence, like the glow of safety that wrapped her as a child when her mother had held her. It was sanctuary and it bolstered Thirianna's confidence. She

started to recite the words taught to her by Kelamith and felt her consciousness slipping further into the infinity circuit.

‘Thirianna will stay where she is, deep enough to see,’ said the farseer.

The sensation was different this time. Thirianna understood what Kelamith meant about being part of the infinity circuit while remaining separate. Her form had become the infinity circuit but her being remained as it was and her mind lingered between the two.

Her world had become a glittering web of power, but rather than try to see it all, she concentrated on what was close at hand. She was inside the Arc of the Turning Suns. She could feel the flutter of the engineers touching upon the infinity circuit as they tended to the star-sails gathering energy from the dying sun. With another part of her mind she could witness them at their stations, making gentle adjustments to the massive solar collectors to maximise their efficiency.

She became aware of Kelamith beside her, watching without comment. He appeared as a golden spark in the infinity circuit, his psychic energy diffusing along dozens of conduits but concentrated close at hand.

Something else flickered into her consciousness. At first they were too fast to comprehend; flashing pinpricks that had raced past by the time her mind had become aware of them. Thirianna narrowed her focus, picking a handful of crystalline threads to interact with. The speed of everything seemed to slow as her thoughts coalesced, making the workings of the infinity circuit plainer to see.

The constant thrum of psychic energy became a slower pulse, moving outwards along the conduits of the infinity circuit in rhythm to Alaitoc’s ponderous heartbeat. It rippled from the core to the rim, near-instantaneous in reality, but to her mind’s eye becoming subtle, entrancing waves.

More of the bright sparks she had seen passed close by and Thirianna caught them with her thoughts, her scrutiny slowing their progress.

There were several dozen of them, clustered in groups each a handful strong. They appeared as tiny creatures, each group occupying the area of a fingernail. Yet there was immense power contained in their miniscule forms. Looking even more closely, she saw tiny clawed legs splaying across the threads of energy and she realised she looked upon the warp spiders from which the Aspect Warriors of the same name drew inspiration.

Each warp spider raced along the infinity circuit’s threads, dozens of legs moving faster than thought. They rode upon the pulses of energy, then dashed back to the core before the next, heaved out on the tide of psychic power before returning to the hub.

They became aware of Thirianna and investigated. They circled around the mote of consciousness that was her mind, scurrying to and fro while they inspected her. Created to guard the infinity circuit from malign presences, the warp spiders quickly realised that Thirianna was no foe and relaxed their guard.

Rather than move on, they circled playfully around her, excited by this new presence. She could feel the tiny pinpricks of energy passing through her as the warp spiders danced across the infinity circuit, joyfully clambering around and through her thoughts.

The warp spiders were like a psychic tickle running through her mind, each a particle of purity and happiness that left a warm trail where it touched her, criss-crossing her memories and thoughts with tiny footsteps.

The experience was cleansing, the warp spiders feeding on tiny shreds of negative energy that leaked from Thirianna’s deepest fears and worst emotions; fears and emotions kept locked away in the recesses of her mind but never wholly secured.

‘It will be enough for the moment.’ Kelamith washed through Thirianna, scattering the warp spiders. ‘Thirianna will have her first true taste of the infinity circuit, but she must quell her curiosity and retain control.’

Kelamith’s mind linked with Thirianna’s and pulled her across the infinity circuit back to

the Chambers of the Seers. For a strange moment Thirianna found herself looking at her own form. She realised that no matter how graceful and poised her body seemed, to the realm of the purely psychic it was crude as any other physical structure, with the same imperfections and compromises as any living being.

It was a humbling moment, right before she was reunited with the shell of her body.

Thirianna felt a wave of claustrophobia as she was restricted to her normal, physical senses again. The weight of her form was a burden to her thoughts, which struggled across chemical synapses and along physical nerves.

The sensation of loss passed and Thirianna opened her eyes, looking at her hands upon the infinity circuit node. Kelamith stood to her right, eyes blazing with psychic energy. He turned that otherworldly stare upon Thirianna.

'Thirianna will do well, but she must be told that this is only the beginning,' said Kelamith. 'She will return here in the next cycle and we will continue.'

'Yes, she will,' Thirianna said, her mind still tingling with after-effects from the warp spiders.