

XENOS

An Eisenhorn Novel by Dan Abnett

THE THUNDERING SOUND rolled through the thawing vaults of Processional Two-Twelve.

Fists and palms, beating at coffin hoods. The sleepers were waking, their frigid bodies trapped in their caskets. I could hear footsteps above the screams. Eyclone was running. I ran after, passing gallery after gallery of frenzied, flailing forms. The screaming, the pounding... God-Emperor help me, I will never forget that.

Thousands of souls waking up to death, frantic, agonised. Damn Eyclone. Damn him to hell and back.



THE INQUISITION moves amongst mankind like an avenging shadow, striking down the enemies of humanity with uncompromising ruthlessness. Inquisitor Eisenhorn faces a vast interstellar cabal and the dark power of daemons, all racing to recover an arcane text of abominable power – an ancient tome known as the Necroteuch.

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TWO DAYS LATER, aboard the Essene at anchor beyond the treacherous reaches of system KCX-1288, we made our rendezvous with the Imperial taskforce outbound from Gudrun.

We'd made good our escape from the world of the plateau in less than two hours. As Aemos had predicted, the place seemed to unravel around us, as if that apparently timeless realm of the sea, the beach and the uplands had been nothing but an ingenious construct, a space engineered by the saruthi to accommodate the meeting with their human 'guests'. As we rode the gun-cutter back to the waiting Essene, the hazy radiance had begun to dim and atmospheric pressure dropped. We were beset by turbulence, and natural gravity began to reassert its influence. The impossible cavity had begun to decompose. By the time Maxilla was running the Essene down the dark corridor of arches as fast as he dared, the inner space where we had confronted the aliens was nothing but a dark maelstrom of ammonia and arsenical vapours. Our chronometers and horologiums had begun to run properly again.

We left the fractured planet behind, braving flares and gravity storms as we made a dash for the outer system. Forty minutes after leaving that place, rear-aligned sensors could find no trace of the 'wound', as if it had collapsed, or had never been there to begin with.

How the saruthi came and went I had no idea, and Aemos was little help. We had seen no sign of other vessels or other points of egress from the planet's crust.

'Do they live within the planet?' I asked Aemos as we stood at an observation platform, looking back at the retreating star through glare-dimmed ports.

'I fancy not. Their technologies are beyond my ken, but I feel that they might have arrived on the plateau through those

archways from another world, into a place they had built for the meeting.'

Such a concept defied my imaginings. Aemos was suggesting interstellar teleportation.

Outside the system, there had been little trace of the heretical fleet. As far as Maxilla was able to tell from drive and warp wakes, the three ships, no doubt bearing Locke and Dazzo, had rejoined their attentive flotilla and moved away almost at once into the immaterium.

Other warp indicators informed us that the taskforce was approaching, no more than two days away. We dropped grav-anchor, saw to our wounds, and waited.

THIRTY WEEKS BEFORE, as we departed Damask, I had sent my request for assistance to Gudrun via Lowink astropathically. I had outlined as much of the situation as possible, providing what detail and conjecture I could, and had hoped the Lord Militant would send a military expedition to support me. I did not demand, as the likes of Commodus Voke were wont to do. I was sure the urgency and importance of my communiqué would speak for itself.

ELEVEN SHIPS LOOMED out of the empyrean before us in battle formation: six Imperial frigates running out in the van, fighter wings riding out ahead of them in formation. Behind this spearhead of warships came the battleships Vulpecula and Saint Scythus, each three times the size of the frigates, each a bristling ogre of a vessel. To the rear was an ominous trio of cruisers, black ships of the Imperial Inquisition. This was no military expedition. This was an inquisitorial taskforce.

We exchanged hails, identified ourselves and were escorted into the fleet pack by an honour guard of thunderhawks. Shuttles transferred our wounded, including the still unconscious Fischig and the prisoner Malahite, to medicae faculties aboard the Saint Scythus. An hour later, at the request of Admiral Spatian, I also crossed by shuttle to the battleship. They were awaiting my report.

MY LEFT ARM bound and tightly slung in a surgical brace, I wore a suit of black and my button-sleeved leather coat, my rosette pinned at my throat. Aemos, in sober green robes, accompanied me.

In the echoing vault of the Saint Scythus's docking bay, Procurator Olm Madorthene and a detail of navy stormtroopers waited to greet us. Madorthene wore the impressive white dress uniform in which I had first seen him, and the men's blue armour was rich with gold braid and ceremonial decoration.

Madorthene greeted me with a salute and we strode as a group towards the elevators that would carry us up into the command levels of the ship.

'How goes the uprising?' I asked.

'Well enough, inquisitor. We understand the Lord Militant has declared the Helican Schism over and quashed, though pacification wars are still raging across Thracian.'

'Losses?'

'Considerable. Mainly to the population and materials of the world affected, though some fleet and guard units have taken a beating. Lord Glaw's treason has cost the Imperium dear.'

'Lord Glaw's treason has cost him his life. His body rots on a nameless world in the system behind us.'

He nodded. 'Your master will be pleased.'

'My master?'

LORD INQUISITOR PHLEBAS Alessandro Rorken sat in a marble throne at the far end of a chapel-like audience hall two decks beneath the main bridge of the Saint Scythus. I had met him twice before, and felt no more confident now for those experiences. He wore simple robes of crimson over black clothing and gloves, and no other decoration except for a gold signet ring of office on one knuckle. The austere simplicity of his garb seemed to accentuate his authority. His noble skull was shaved except for a forked goatee. His eyes, deep set and wise, glittered with intelligence.

Around him was his entourage. Ten inquisitorial novices of interrogator rank or below, upheld banners, sacred flamer weapons, caskets of scrolls and slates, gleaming tools of torture on red satin cushions, or open hymnals. Flanking them were four bodyguards in red cloaks with double-handed broadswords held stiffly upright before their faces. Their armour was ornate, and the full visors had been fashioned and painted into the likenesses of four apostolic saints: Olios, Jerido, Manezzer and Kadmon. The masks were flat-eyed and expressionless and almost naive, lifted exactly from

representations on illuminated manuscripts of old. A huddle of dark-robed savants waited nearby, and a dozen cherub servitors in the form of podgy three-year-olds with golden locks and the spiteful faces of gargoyles circled around, scolding and mocking, on grav-assisted golden wings.

'Approach, Eisenhorn,' Lord Rorke said, his soft voice carrying down the chamber effortlessly. 'Approach all.'

At his words, other figures emerged from anterooms along the sides of the hall, and took their seats to either hand. One was Admiral Spatian, an ancient, skeletal giant in white dress uniform, attended by several of his senior staff. The others were inquisitors. Titus Endor, in his maroon coat, unescorted save for a hunched female savant. He cast me an encouraging nod as I passed by. Commodus Voke, wizened and shuffling, helped onto his seat by a tall man in black. The man's head was bald and hairless apart from a few sickly clumps. His scalp, neck and face were livid with scar-tissue from injuries and surgery. It was Heldane. His encounter with the carnodon had not improved his looks. Like Endor, Voke nodded to me, but there was no friendship in it.

Next to him, Inquisitor Schongard, stocky and squat, the black metal mask obscuring everything but his raddled eyes. He took his seat and was flanked by two lean, supple females, members of some death-cult by the look of them, both nearly naked save for extensive body art, barbed hoods and harnesses strung with blades.

Opposite Schongard sat Konrad Molitor, an ultra-radical member of the ordos I had little love or respect for. Molitor was a fit, athletic man dressed from head to toe in a tight weave-armour bodyglove of yellow and black check with a polished silver cuirass strapped around his torso. His black hair was close-trimmed and tonsured and he affected the air of a warrior monk from the First Crusade. Behind him stood three robed and hooded acolytes, one carrying Molitor's ornate powersword, another a silver chalice and paten, and the third a reliquary box and a smoking censer. Molitor's pupils were bright yellow and his gaze never wavered from me.

Last to take his seat, at Lord Rorke's right hand, was a giant in black power armour, a Space Marine of the Deathwatch chapter, the dedicated unit of the Ordo Xenos. The Deathwatch was one of the Chambers Militant, Marine chapters founded

exclusively for the Inquisition, obscure and secret even by the standards of the blessed Adeptus Astartes. At my approach, the warrior removed his helmet and set it on his armoured knee, revealing a slab-jawed, pale face and cropped grey hair. His thin mouth was curled in a frown.

Servitors brought a seat for me, and I took my place facing the Lord Inquisitor. Aemos stood at my side, silent for once.

'We have read your preliminary report, Brother Eisenhorn. Quite a tale it is. Of great moment.' Lord Rorken savoured the last word. 'You pursued Glaw's heretic fleet to this Emperor-forsaken outer world, certain that they planned to trade with a xenos breed. That trade, you stated, was for an item whose very nature would threaten the safety and sanctity of our society.'

'I reported correctly, lord brother.'

'We have known you always to be earnest and truthful, brother. We did not doubt your words. After all, are we not here in... unusual force?'

He gestured around and there was some laughter, most of it forced, most of it from Voke and Molitor.

'And what was this item?'

'The aliens possessed a single copy of a profane and forbidden work we know as the Necroteuch.'

The reaction was immediate. Voices rose all around, in surprise, alarm or disbelief. I heard Voke, Molitor and Schongard all calling out questions and scorn. The assembled retainers, novices and acolytes around us whispered or gabbled furiously. The cherubs wailed and fluttered into hiding behind Lord Rorken's throne. Rorken himself studied me dubiously. I saw that even the grim Space Marine looked questioningly at the inquisitor.

Lord Rorken raised his hand and the hubbub died away.

'Is that confirmed, Brother Eisenhorn?'

'Lord, it is. I saw it with my own eyes and felt its evil. It was the Necroteuch. As far as I have learned, the xenos breed - known as the saruthi - came upon a lost copy thousands of years ago, and through recently established lines of communication with the Glaw cabal, agreed to exchange it for certain artefacts of their own culture.'

'Preposterous!' spat Commodus Voke. 'The Necroteuch is a myth, and a wretched one at that! These twisted alien filth have fabricated this as a lure for the gullible heretics!'

I looked over at Voke and repeated, 'I saw it with my own eyes and felt its evil. It was the Necroteuch.'

Admiral Spatian looked up at Lord Rorken. 'This thing, this book - is it so valuable that these heretics would throw the entire sub-sector into schism to cover their attempts to retrieve it?'

'It is priceless!' cut in Molitor from across the chamber. 'Beyond worth! If the legends of it are even fractionally true, it contains lore surpassing our understanding! They would not think twice of burning worlds to get it, or of sacrificing their entire resources to acquire the power it would bring them.'

'It has always been plain,' Endor said softly, 'that the stakes in this matter have been astonishingly high. Though I am shocked by Brother Gregor's news, I am not surprised. Only an icon as potent as the Necroteuch could have set this bloodshed in motion.'

'But the Necroteuch! Such a thing!' Schongard hissed.

'Were they successful, Inquisitor Eisenhorn?' the Space Marine asked suddenly, staring directly at me.

'No, brother-captain, they were not. The effort was desperate and close run, but my force was able to spoil their contact with the xenos saruthi. The aliens were driven off, and most of the heretics' advance guard, including Lord Glaw and a blasphemous child of the Emperor allied to his cause, were slain.'

'I read of this Mandragore in your report,' said the Marine. 'His presence was fundamental in the decision for my unit to accompany this force.'

'The Emperor's Children, Terra damn their souls, clearly wanted the book for themselves. They had sent Mandragore to assist Glaw in its recovery. That beings such as they took it seriously confirms the truth of my story, I believe.'

The noble Marine nodded. 'And Mandragore is dead, you say?'

'I killed him myself.'

The Deathwatch warrior sat back slightly, his brows rising gently in surprise.

'Some heretics escaped your purge?' Schongard asked.

'Two key conspirators, brother. The trader, Gorgone Locke, who I believe was instrumental in forging the original contact between the saruthi and Glaw's cabal. And an ecclesiarch

named Dazzo, who I would see as the spiritual force behind their enterprise. They fled from the fight, rejoined the waiting elements of their fleet, and left this system.'

'Destination?' asked Spatian.

'It is still being plotted, admiral.'

'And how many ships? That bastard traitor Estrum ran with fifteen.'

'He lost at least two frigates in that star system. A non-standard merchant ship that I believe belongs to Locke is with them.'

'Have they taken to their heels and run defeated, or have they some further agenda?' Lord Rorken asked.

'I have further research to make before I can answer that, lord.'

Spatian stood and looked towards the Lord Inquisitor. 'Even if they're running, we can't permit them to escape. They must be hounded down and annihilated. Permission to retask the battle-pack and prepare to pursue.'

'Permission granted, admiral.'

Then Molitor spoke up. 'No one has asked the most important question of our heroic Brother Eisenhorn,' he said, stressing the word 'heroic' in a way that did not flatter. 'What happened to the Necroteuch?'

I turned to face him. 'I did what any of us would have done, Brother Molitor. I burned it.'

UPROAR FOLLOWED. Molitor was on his feet, accusing me of nothing short of heresy at the top of his reedy voice. Schongard raised his own serpentine tones in support of the accusations, while Endor and Voke shouted them down. The retinues howled and bickered across the floor. Both the Deathwatch captain and I remained seated and silent.

Lord Rorken rose. 'Enough!' He turned to the glowering Molitor. 'State your objection, Brother Molitor, quickly and simply.'

Molitor nodded, and licked his lips, his yellow eyes darting around the room. 'Eisenhorn must suffer our sternest censure for this act of vandalism! The Necroteuch may be a foul and proscribed work, but we are the Inquisition, lord. By what right did he simply destroy it? Such a thing should have been sequestered and brought before our most learned savants for

study! To obliterate it out of hand robs us of knowledge, of wisdom, of secrets unimaginable! The contents of the Necroteuch might have given us insight into the archenemy of mankind, incalculable insight! How might it have strengthened us and armed us for the ceaseless fight? Eisenhorn has disgraced the very heart of our sacred Inquisition!’

‘Brother Schongard?’

‘My lord, I agree. It was a desperate and rash action by Eisenhorn. Carefully handled, the Necroteuch would have provided us with all measure of advantageous knowledge. Its arcane secrets would have been weapons against the foe. I may applaud his rigorous efforts in thwarting Claw and his conspirators, but this erasure of occult lore earns only my opprobrium.’

‘Brother Voke? What s-’ Lord Rorken began, but I cut him off.

‘Is this a court, my lord? Am I on trial?’

‘No, brother, you are not. But the magnitude of your actions must be analysed and considered. Brother Voke?’

Voke rose. ‘Eisenhorn was right. The Necroteuch was an abomination. It would have been heresy to permit its continued existence!’

‘Brother Endor?’

Titus did not rise. He turned in his seat and looked down the hall at Konrad Molitor. ‘Gregor Eisenhorn has my full support. From your moaning, Molitor, I wonder what kind of man I am listening to. A radical, certainly. An inquisitor? I have my doubts.’

Molitor leapt up again, raging. ‘You knave! You whoreson bastard knave! How dare you?’

‘Very easily,’ replied Endor, leaning back and folding his arms. ‘And you, Schongard, you are no better. Shame on you! What secrets did you both think we could learn, except perhaps how to pollute our minds and boil away our sanity? The Necroteuch has been forbidden since before our foundation. We need not know what’s in it to accept that prohibition! All we need is the precious knowledge that it should be destroyed, unread, on sight. Tell me, do you need to actually contract Uhlren’s Pox yourself to know that it is fatal?’

Lord Rorken smiled at this. He glanced at the Space Marine. ‘Brother-Captain Cynewolf?’

The captain made a modest shrug. ‘I command kill-teams charged with the extermination of aliens, mutants and heretics, lord. The ethics of scholarship and book-learning I leave to the

savants. For whatever it's worth, though, I would have burned it without a second thought.'

There was a long silence. Sometimes I was almost glad no one could tell when I was smiling.

Lord Rorken sat back. 'The objections of my brothers are noted. I myself commend Eisenhorn. Given the extremity of his situation, he made the best decision.'

'Thank you, my lord.'

'Let us retire now and consider this matter. I want to hear proposals for our next course of action in four hours.'

'WHAT NOW?' Titus Endor asked as we sat in his private suite aboard the Saint Scythus. A female servitor brought us glasses of vintage amasec, matured in nalwood casks.

'The remnants must be purged,' I said. 'Dazzo and the rest of the heretic fleet. They may have been cheated of their prize, and they may be running now. Perhaps they'll run for years. But they have the resources of a battlegroup at their disposal, and the will to use it. I will recommend we hunt them down and finish this sorry matter once and for all.'

Aemos entered the chamber, made a respectful nod to Endor, and handed me a data-slate.

'The admiral's astronavigators have finished plotting the course of the heretic fleet. It matches the estimations Maxilla has just sent me.'

I scanned the data. 'Do you have a chart, Titus?'

He nodded and engaged the functions of a glass-topped cogitator unit. The surface glowed, and he entered the reference codes from the slate.

'So... they're not running back into Imperial space. No surprise. Nor out to the lawless distances of the Halo Stars.'

'Their course takes them here: 56-Izar. Ten weeks away.'

'In saruthi territory.'

'Right in the heart of saruthi territory.'

LORD INQUISITOR RORKEN nodded gravely. 'As you say, brother, this business may be less finished than we thought.'

'They cannot hope to count the saruthi as allies, or believe they would give them safe haven. The entente between Glaw's forces and the xenos breed was fragile and tenuous to say the least, and what peace existed between them was ruined by the violence. Dazzo must have some other reason to head there.'

Lord Rorken paced the floor of his state chamber, brooding, toying with the signet ring of office on his gloved finger. His flock of cherubs roosted uneasily along the backs of armchairs and couches around the room. Twitching their gargoyle heads from one side to another, they watched me keenly as I stood waiting for a reply. 'My imagination runs wild, Eisenhorn,' he said at last.

'I intend to question the archeoxenologist, Malahite, directly. I am sure he can furnish us with additional intelligence. Just as I am sure he lacks the capacity to resist displayed by his aristo master Urisel.'

Rorken stopped pacing and clapped his gloved hands together with a decisive smack. Startled, the cherubs flew up into the air and began mobbing around the high ceiling. 'Course will be laid for 56-Izar at once,' said Lord Rorken, ignoring their lispng squawk. 'Bring me your findings without delay.'

NAVAL SECURITY HAD imprisoned Girolamo Malahite in the secure wing of the battleship's medicae facility. The injury I had given him had been treated, but no effort had been made to equip him with a prosthetic limb. I was looking forward to opening his secrets.

I passed through the coldly lit infirmary, and checked on Fischig. He was still unconscious, though a physician told me his condition was stable. The chastener lay on a plastic-tented cot, wired into wheezing life-supporting pumps and gurgling circulators, his damaged form masked by dressings, anointing charms and metal bone-clamps.

From the infirmary, I passed down an unheated main companionway, showed my identification to the duty guards, and entered the forbidding secure wing. I was at a second checkpoint, at the entrance to the gloomy cell block itself, when I heard screaming ringing from a cell beyond.

I pushed past the guards and, with them at my heels, reached the greasy iron shutters of the cell.

'Open it!' I barked, and one of the guards fumbled with his ring of electronic keys. 'Quickly, man!'

The cell shutter whirred open and locked into its open setting. Konrad Molitor and his three hooded acolytes turned to face me, outraged at the interruption. Their surgically gloved hands were wet with pink froth.

Behind them, Girolamo Malahite lay whimpering on a horizontal metal cage strung on chains from the ceiling. He was naked, and almost every centimetre of skin had been peeled from his flesh.

'FETCH SURGEONS AND physicians. And summon Lord Rorken. Now!' I told the cell guards. 'Would you care to explain what you are doing here?' I said to Molitor.

He would, I think, have preferred not to answer me, and his trio of retainers looked set to grapple with me and hurl me from the cell.

But the muzzle of my autopistol was pressed flat against Konrad Molitor's perspiring brow and none of them dared move.

'I am conducting an interview with the prisoner...' he began.

'Malahite is my prisoner.'

'He is in the custody of the Inquisition, Brother Eisenhorn...'

'He is my prisoner, Molitor! Inquisitorial protocol permits me the right to question him first!'

Molitor tried to back away, but I kept the pressure of the gun firm against his cranium. There was no mistaking the fury in his eyes at this treatment, but he contained it, realising provocation was the last thing I needed.

'I, I was concerned for your health, brother,' he began, trying to mollify, 'the injuries you have suffered, your fatigue. Malahite had to be interrogated with all speed, and thought I would ease your burden by commencing the-'

'Commencing? You've all but killed him! I don't believe your excuse for a moment, Molitor. If you'd truly intended to help me, you would have asked permission. You wanted his secrets for yourself.'

'A damn lie!' he spat.

I cocked the pistol with my thumb. In the confines of the iron cell, the click was loud and threatening. 'Indeed? Then share what you have learned so far.'

He hesitated. 'He proved resilient. We have learned little from him.'

Boots clattered down the cell bay outside and the guards returned with two green robed fleet surgeons and a quartet of medicae orderlies.

'Throne of Terra!' one of the surgeons cried, seeing the ruined man on the rack.

'Do what you can, doctor. Stabilise him.'

The physicians hurried to work, calling for tools, apparatus and cold dressings. Malahite whimpered again.

'Threatening an Imperial inquisitor with deadly force is a capital crime,' said one of the hooded acolytes, edging forward.

'Lord Rorken will be displeased,' said another.

'Put away your weapon and our master will co-operate,' the third added.

'Tell your sycophants to be silent,' I told Molitor.

'Please, Inquisitor Eisenhorn.' The third acolyte spoke again, his soft voice issuing from the shadows of his cowl. 'This is an unfortunate mistake. We will make reparations. Put away your weapon.'

The voice was strangely confident, and in speaking for Molitor, displayed surprising authority. But no more than Aemos or Midas would have done for me should the situation have been reversed.

'Take your assistants and get out, Molitor. We will continue this once I have spoken with Lord Rorken.'

The four of them left swiftly, and I holstered my weapon.

The chief physician came over to me, shaking his head. 'This man is dead, sir.'

AT LORD RORKEN'S request, the warship's senior ecclesiarch provided a great chapel amidships for our use. I think the shipboard curia was impressed by the Lord Inquisitor's fury.

We had little time to repair the damage done by the incident, even though the medicae had placed Malahite's lamentable corpse in a stasis field.

Lord Rorken wanted to conduct the matter himself, but realised he was duty bound to offer me the opportunity first. To have denied me would have compounded Molitor's insult, even if Rorken was Lord Inquisitor.

I told Rorken I welcomed the task, adding that my working knowledge of the entire case made me the best candidate.

WE ASSEMBLED IN the chapel. It was a long hall of fluted columns and mosaic flooring. Stained glass windows depicting the triumphs of the Emperor were backlit by the empyrean vortex outside the ship. The chamber rumbled with the through-deck vibration of the Saint Scythus's churning drive.

The facing ranks of pews and the raised stalls to either side were filling with Inquisitorial staff and ecclesiarchs. All my 'brothers' were in attendance, even Molitor, who I knew would not be able to stay away.

I walked with Lowink down the length of the nave to the raised plinth where Malahite lay in stasis. Astropaths, nearly thirty of them, drawn from the ship's complement and the inquisitorial delegation, had assembled behind it. Hooded, misshapen, some borne along on wheeled mechanical frames or carried on litters by dour servitors, they hissed and murmured among themselves. Lowink went to brief them. He seemed to relish this moment of superiority over astropaths who normally outranked him. Lowink had not the power to manage this rite alone; his resources were enough for only the simplest psychometric audits. But his knowledge of my abilities and practises made him vital in orchestrating their efforts.

I looked at Malahite, flayed and pathetic in the shimmering envelope of stasis. Grotesquely, he reminded me of the God-Emperor himself, resting for eternity in the great stasis field of the golden throne, preserved until the end of time from the death Horus had tried to bestow upon him.

Lowink nodded to me. The astropathic choir was ready.

I looked around and found Endor's face in the congregation. He had placed himself near Molitor and had promised to watch the bastard closely for me. Schongard sat near the back, disassociating himself from his fellow radical's transgression.

I saw Brother-Captain Cynewolf and two of his awe-inspiring fellow Space Marines take their place behind the altar screen. All of them were in full armour and carried storm bolters. They weren't here for the show. They were here as a safeguard.

'Proceed, brother,' Lord Rorken said from his raised seat.

The choir began to nurse the folds of the warp apart with their swelling adoration. Psychic cold swept through the vault, and some in the congregation moaned, either in fear or with involuntary empathic vibration.

Commodus Voke, helped from his seat by the baleful Heldane, shuffled forward to join me. As a concession to Lord Rorken for allowing me this honour, I had agreed that the veteran inquisitor could partake of the auto-seance at my side. The risk was great, after all. Two minds were better than one, and in truth, it would be good to have the old reptile's mental power at close hand.

'Lower the stasis field,' I said. The moaning of the astropaths grew louder. As the translucent field died away, Voke and I reached out ungloved hands and touched the oozing, skinless face.

THE VEIL OF the warp drew back. I looked as if down a pillar of smoke, ghost white, which rushed up around me. In my ears, the harrowing screams of infinity and the billion billion souls castaway therein...

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