Weaver Option Teaser 01 June 2021

**Black Crusade 10.2**

**Cadia Stands**

*You aren’t my brother.*

*You say you remember the black sands of Isstvan V? So do I.*

*I never forgot the day your treachery was revealed to the entire galaxy and my Legion was destroyed. I never could. Eidetic memory is a cruel curse in that regard.*

*You know what is the most terrible thing of the entire affair? Of all the Legions involved in this great treachery, yours is the one I was the most surprised to discover. The oath-breaking of Curze didn’t give me pause. The Night Haunter may pretend he did it because the future was always destined to lead us where we stand, but it is a lie. Konrad did it because it is way easier to slaughter innocents and defenceless people when they can’t oppose a bloody resistance to his Legion of assassins and torturers. And he always loved carnage for carnage’s sake.*

*The other Legions are of the same ilk, with almost no exception. Perturabo introduced decimation and the most insane methods of attrition warfare to a force which was already nicknamed ‘Corpse-grinders’, and then had the gall to wonder why people were ill-at-ease around him. Alpharius was so fond of secrets we were never able to discover if the individual speaking to us was a Space Marine masquerading as him or the real deal. Mortarion delighted in his hatred of psykers and presenting the interior of his ships as morbid catacombs. Angron...he was broken long before the Imperium found him. I’m sure he still blames our Father with what little intelligence left in him, but the truth is that the arena where he made his bloody debuts was the end of his potential and his capacity to feel an ember of friendship and brotherhood. The Nails made sure of that.*

*Horus was the worst. Guilliman and the Khan often lamented in the ruins of Terra how the corruption of Chaos had ruined everything, but this is a point where I vehemently disagree with them.*

*Horus didn’t need Chaos to do horrible things to his brothers and the forces under his command. I saw at the Battle of Gate 42 what he really was concerned about. Glory. Power. Fame. Recognition. Maybe our Father judged his oaths and two centuries of loyalty would be enough to compensate for this mountain of arrogance he carried within his heart. If so, he was critically mistaken.*

*Horus was the worst...before you topped him from this pedestal. Horus was nothing but a puppet when he fell to Chaos, I see it clearly now. You weren’t.*

*I was surprised. And yet as I read the archives of the time between my discovery, my analysis was quick to discard this initial judgement. You were given a superb instrument of war, a Legion whose record had not been marred by five defeats. In all aspects, be they gene-seed compatibility, tactics, weaponry resupply, ship boarding’s operation, the Seventeenth Legion was as adaptable and formidable as the future Ultramarines, if not more so.*

*You could have been the paragon of the Imperial Truth. You could have been the replacement of Malcador. You certainly had the administrative capacity and the empathy gene-forged into you. You could have been a far better candidate for the title of Warmaster. You certainly weren’t keen on butchering the forces of your allies for the greater glory of your Legion.*

*But you only cared about Gods. Gods here, Gods, there, Gods that. And when people come to remind you the consequences of your treacherous deeds, your reaction is always the same.*

*You flee.*

*You say I have failed twice.*

*I think you have somewhat edited your memories of our fights. In each case when you saw your death coming, the truth was revealed.*

*When the time is there to choose between your survival and accomplishing the will of your so-called Gods, the former always takes priority.*

*I will get a third chance to end your life. I do not need precognition powers to know that.*

*I can’t kill an entire Legion by myself. But I do not need to. The Imperium still stands, billions of men standing guard across the stars, loyal to their oaths, inheritors of the dream you deliberately broke because atheism wasn’t someone to your liking.*

*The power of Octarite and Chaos Undivided is waning. The pacts and promises you made are worth exactly as much as every pact the immaterial abominations ever swore, which is to say, none.*

*You think you have planned for anything. You think your insane gambits can force back your problems into non-existence if you shout and scream enough.*

*You are wrong.*

*And at the end of the path, this Black Crusade will be remembered as your folly, and no one else.*

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“*Whoever pretends a game of Regicide or any variation of chess is a good preparation for war will be demoted from one rank minimally. And if anyone insists, make it two or three. The conduct of military operations isn’t a game. Enemy forces on both sides of a battlefield are never equal in numbers and capabilities. You rarely have the opportunity to look at the enemy’s supreme commander in the eye before you kill him. And above all, you certainly don’t have to limit yourself to a limited count of actions before letting him play his own strategy. Repeat after me: Regicide isn’t war. In a true conflict, a competent leader will always try to keep the enemy off-balance. Whatever the results of the first moves, the opponents, be they xenos, traitors, heretics, or worse, must always react to your plans. Don’t cede initiative. Don’t let them catch their breath. And never, ever, give them a fair fight*.” Basileia Taylor Hebert, 308M35.

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“*When you launch a Black Crusade, be aware the first hundred betrayals aiming to remove you from supreme command are already enacted behind your back*.” Warmaster Abaddon the Despoiler, M34.

“*There won’t be any betrayal in this Black Crusade. How could there be, when we never trusted our gallant allies for a single second*?” Legion Master Drecarth the Sightless, M35.

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“*Soldiers I speak with near-always hold the view that the Great Heresy was the most devastating conflict ever fought in the Imperium history. And to be fair, it isn’t completely wrong: the scale and the military size of the belligerents make mockeries of most military operations fought after the Scouring. But in terms of sorcery, ferocity, massacres, percentage of casualties and plenty of other aspects? The centuries after His entombment have not been free of horrors. Even after the Arch-Traitor was slain, the times of the Great Crusade where a few hundreds of Space Marines could bring into submission an entire Sector are long gone. War has changed over the last millennia. Planets are militarised to an unbelievable degree compared to the standards set in late M30. The Imperium has changed. Nowhere is it most evident in the battles which were fought at the onset of the 5th Black Crusade, the Volga Encounter and the Cadian Hell..*.” [CLASSIFIED] [CLASSIFIED] [CLASSIFIED]

**Segmentum Obscurus**

**Cadian Sector**

**Cadian System**

**Cadia**

**Kasr Tyrok**

**8.188.310M35**

Thought for the day: Death is the only answer.

**Warmaster Ender Trevayne**

“And the 788th of Cadia is now officially reinstated as a Penal Legion.”

“Good riddance,” the Armageddon-born Warmaster would have not voiced it if Waldersee was present, prickly Cadian honour and all of that, but the Governor Primus wasn’t here. “How many of the Merovincha Sentinels did we lose?”

“Seventeen, Warmaster,” the saddest thing about the heretics was not their unbelievable ability to look themselves in the mirror and find nothing was wrong, in Ender’s opinion. It was their belief the galaxy found their brand of irony funny. “It seems the world they were training some of their officers has been corrupted without raising the Holy Inquisition’s suspicions.”

“If we survive this year, the purges are not going to be minor. Where does it leave the northern approaches of Kasr Tyrok?”

One of the Colonels of his staff coughed in embarrassment.

“Provided we don’t deploy some of the Cadian reserves, we are going to have a large gap in the Septentrionalis-Tyrok line...”

One look at a map was enough to know this time, it was the Arch-Enemy who had made a colossal mistake.

“Then leave it be.”

“Warmaster? Lesson one of the Tactica Imperialis is not to leave the kind of defensive line we created unmanned...”

“Assuming you live long enough to reach High Command,” the victor of the Puerto Crusade retorted while walking around the room and trying to assimilate the maximum of data at once, “you will realise the Lesson one of the Imperial Guard is to do whatever it takes to destroy your enemy and accomplish the objectives Holy Terra gives you. Victory excuses many things. Failure does not.”

Many men looked unconvinced. That was why Ender Trevayne had not been happy with his assignment: save the thirty-five regiments he had brought with him to Cadia, none of the other forces had fought with him in the last years.

And so while with most of his subordinates he would have explained his reasoning weeks after the battle, this time he gave away some bits of his tactical thinking.

“Kill Zone One is behind this gap, and Battle-Maniple Delta of Legio Astraman is ideally placed to flank them if they think to throw everything they have into it. One way or another, they will lose.”

He had other reserves and assets ready to transform the heretics into mincemeat, but the Cadians unaware of them weren’t ready to hear the list of them.

“Situation in space?” The Warmaster of the Imperium of Mankind turned to the Navy’s representative.

“We lost the five flotillas guarding the approaches of the Warp anomaly, Warmaster. Five Light Cruisers, twelve Frigates, and twenty-two Destroyers. They have broken through the first two minefields and now are pouring everything they have into the breaches. Auspex reading’s accuracy is extremely low, but we have full confirmation of eight Apocalypse-sized Space Hulks, two Abyss-class heretic Super-Battleships, ninety-eight Battleships, at least three dozen Grand Cruisers, and over five hundred Cruisers. We have no proper count for the non-capital ships units...they are simply uncountable...and our probes are destroyed by Heldrakes the moment they go too close.”

And it was just what the Imperial defenders could see. Ender was ready to bet everything he possessed – and with his successes and his triumphs, he possessed a lot of things – the heretics had not shown them half of what they had brought to the party.

“Tell Lord Admiral von Bismarck I recommend he launches the fire ships against the enemy Raiders.”

“Warmaster? The plan you agreed to was to use them against the largest units of the Traitors! And they have Space Hulks!”

What was it with these Cadians to never shut up and transmit his orders without a protest?

“Plans change,” Ender Trevayne replied calmly. “The Space Hulks are bound on a collision course to Cadia, and given how many close-quarter monsters they have around them, our first waves have no chance reaching them. We must slaughter their screen first. The sooner we do that, the more their Battleships will be vulnerable to our feints and other manoeuvres.”

“Lord Admiral von Bismarck isn’t going to be pleased.” The second Navy Commander’s expression was best described as mutinous.

“I don’t ask him to be happy. Holy Terra does not demand us to be happy. It asks us to defend Cadia and kill all these heretics. Pass the orders.”

The man didn’t nod or show any sign he was going to obey his command. However, his eyes began to bleed and his skin got darker. Add how he was whispering to himself, and you had the perfect pict to warn you what happened when one’s faith in the God-Emperor wavered.

“Commissar.” The irony that one day, it may very well be him who was subjected to this fate. “It seems there are a few men who could benefit from a fresh reminder that failure to obey the orders of a superior officer is enough for meeting a firing squad.”

“Indeed, Warmaster. We are going to take care of the problem.”

Two minutes later, close to fifty men were on their way to an ignominious demise, and Ender brought more talented officers from the many regiments present on Cadia to compensate for the losses.

“The fire ships are advancing, Warmaster.”

“Good. Prepare a Beta-Gamma-pattern bombardment to follow on their wake. The priority targets are the warships below Light Cruiser Tonnage and all the heretical machines of starfighter-equivalent signatures.”

“This is going to leave the enemy battle-line more or less intact,” with a certain amount of displeasure, Ender saw Governor Primus Andreas Waldersee had arrived. Immediately, the Cadians who had continued to be...mildly uncooperative...were suddenly working with alacrity. What a coincidence.

“I know. But one does not hunt the apex predators when there are clouds of carnivorous flies to swat away first.”

The Armageddon officer tried to extrapolate what he wasn’t seeing, the potential plans of the Arch-Enemy, and how many warships had already arrived in the Cadian System...and while he had far from a perfect picture, Ender knew the enemy was already too committed to evade what the Mechanicus and the Navy Starforts had prepared for their damned souls.

“Send them right back to Hell.”

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**64th MOST WANTED BEING OF THE IMPERIUM OF MANKIND**

**DEAD ONLY**

**DRECARTH**

**‘THE SIGHTLESS’**

**‘LEGION MASTER’**

**TRAITOR SPACE MARINE**

**COMMANDER OF THE LARGEST SONS OF HORUS WARBAND IN THE SEGMENTUM THE SONS OF THE EYE**

**TRAITOR FLEET COMMANDER**

**EXCOMMUNICATE TRAITORIS**

**EXTREMIS-ALPHA THREAT**

**ENDENGERMENT OF ALPHA-CLASS MILITARUM ASSETS AND BELOW ACCEPTABLE TO ELIMINATE THE THREAT**

**REWARD: 250 TRILLION THRONE GELTS, 4 PLANETS, 2 LUXURY SPACE STATIONS, MEDALS OF COMMEMORATION FOR KILLING A SPAWN OF THE ARCH-TRAITOR, TITLE OF SHIELD OF NECROMUNDA AWARDED, ETC...**

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**Outer Cadian System**

**Carrion-class Heavy Battleship *Vox Dominus***

**Dark Apostle Paristur**

Unlike the majority of his Legion, Paristur had been present at the Siege of Terra.

He had seen the unprecedented firepower Horus’ armada and Battlefleet Solar had unleashed at each other.

The bombardment of today fired by the slaves of the False Emperor disagreeably reminded him of the Siege, not that he was going to say it aloud.

“Forty thousand torpedoes! Forty thousand torpedoes inbound!”

“Nova Cannon signatures! Fourth Illuminated Squadron! Evade! Evade!”

It was like the outer defences of Cadia were a crown of lasers and explosions. Despite the relatively large distances of this engagement, despite the problems suffered by any mortal technology, the mortal defenders had not convinced themselves they could go away with half-measures.

Paristur would approve, if it didn’t mean more complications for the Grand Plan.

“Fire ships incoming, Lord Apostle. Lord Kor Phaeron insists our Cruisers must protect the Space Hulks before-“

The first hull packed to the brink with promethium, high-grade explosives and the Pantheon only knew how many tons of plasma warheads chose this moment to detonate...right in the middle of a pack of Idolator Raiders.

When the daemonic device replacing the auspexes finally returned to near-functionality after purging a Mechanicus scrambler-attack, it would have taken a lot of imagination to tell there were fifteen Idolator Raiders in this area of space a minute ago.

“They aren’t going after our Space Hulks,” Paristur snarled angrily. “They are going after our Escorts!”

“Isn’t it good news, Lord?” His Coryphaus asked. “I mean, the orders of Blessed Lorgar urged us to preserve our Battleships for the battles after breaking through the Cadian Gate.”

“The torpedoes incoming and their long-range guns won’t seriously hinder a Battleship, be it from the Infernus or the Carrion class,” Paristur growled, “at worse, our shields will be knocked out for a few minutes, and since the Gods shroud us from their pathetic augurs, whatever risk we take is low-key. But our Escorts are far more fragile, and we can’t afford to lose all of them at the very beginning.”

Yet that was exactly what was happening...somewhat an exaggeration, but not a complete lie. Iconoclast and Idolator Raiders were blasted apart in considerable numbers, flotilla by flotilla. As the Grand Armada progressed in the Cadian System, the carcasses and devastated hulks of dozens of lighter starships stayed behind forever, when there was that much left of them.

“The dogs of the False Emperor still continue to hide behind the fixed defences of each planet,” a Khorne worshipper scowled, his fangs obviously red and black. “Cowards.”

Both Dark Apostle and Coryphaus shook their heads in a silent pitying expression. Whatever their faults, the mortals garrisoning Cadia were not exactly fleeing from the battle.

No, it wasn’t cowardice. It was...discipline. Discipline and a great deal of adaptation. Erebus had supposedly been able to steal the plans and the preparation maps of the Cadian High Command, but as always, either the Vile One had lied, or someone had modified them before their assault began.

“We have lost one hundred percent of our fire ships’ first wave.”

“The second?” The Word Bearer’s Dark Apostle didn’t stop staring at the Fortress World on his blessed daemonic device.

“Seventy-seven percent used. We will be clear of the minefields in five minutes.” The horned green-skinned mutant clearly hated announcing bad news, but went ahead after a moment. “The Battlefleets of the False Emperor are still in orbit above the Fortress Worlds.”

“Total losses for our Great Host?”

“Sixty Iconoclasts, twenty Idolators, and nine Cobra Destroyers. We have also lost four Transports, eight lesser auxiliaries, and-“

“Second launch! Second launch, new torpedo profiles coming from Mechanicus Barques! Twenty thousand torpedoes!”

“Shit,” his Coryphaus spoke, “How by Nurgle’s holy bowels did they manage to transfer so many ammunition stocks to Cadia without us being aware of it?”

“We were too confident our spies in the Cadian High Command knew everything,” Paristur admitted reluctantly. “Send the new decoy-hulls of Sota-Nul ahead, they will be our torpedo-sponges...it’s what they were built to do, after all.”

The environment created by a Warp Storm was properly fascinating in countless aspects. Yet, for all its advantages, it had many drawbacks too. One of the biggest obstacles which were known to everyone was that many metals and alloys’ properties were not stable outside of any Warp Storm. That was why the pyramid of Magnus was so extraordinary: it had not imploded, liquefied, or outright mutated into something unable to cross the stars the moment they had arrived at Cadia, while so many other hulls did.

Still, it had been decided these short-lived assets could be of use. It was they who were going to be expended in great numbers at Cadia. It wasn’t a question of size: the Space Hulks were falling into the same category, as their Warp Jumps and speed were properly-

“Lord Apostle, the Space Hulks are changing course again...against the Dark Council’s orders. They are once again on a collision course with Cadia!”

“The Sons of the Eye warships are separating from the Grand Armada! Two Cruisers of the 1st Great Host have been boarded by the Sons of Horus!”

“Night Lords raiders are breaking formation! I repeat, dozens of Night Lord assault ships are breaking formation!”

Paristur watched emotionlessly the carnage continuing for several minutes, as eight of the heaviest military assets in the history of military warfare were now escaping to the authority of the Seventeenth Legion.

“So Drecarth the Sightless has decided to betray us.”

“His disinterest when we spoke how all the Noctilith of the Cadian Pylons could be transformed into Octarite was a bit suspect,” his Dark Acolyte grinned.

“Now, now,” Paristur smiled. “It is not like we spoke of it in front of him about it for...how many times was it?”

“Eighteen times?”

“Yes,” the veteran of the Siege shook his head. “It should be around that number. And it isn’t like we sent him some of the most treacherous cannibal warbands of the Eye, or the most bloodthirsty and rebellious Eighth Legion warbands we could find.”

“You forget the special ammunition and the support of the Legio Krytos he wouldn’t have been able to secure by himself.”

“I had not forgotten,” Paristur chuckled as the eight Space Hulks and a small but still relatively impressive ‘desertion fleet’ continued to accelerate towards the lynchpin of the System’s defends, utterly ignoring the orders of their betters to turn around.

“Curse you, Drecarth,” Paristur said aloud as laughter echoed on the bridge of the *Vox Dominus*. “Curse you for your timely and anticipated betrayal.”