Teaser 30 January 2024

**Legacy 13.2**

**Legacy of Decay**

*Decay.*

*It is such a simple word, isn’t it?*

*It doesn’t sound very dangerous.*

*And yet it is one of the Ruinous Powers, a nightmarish parasite born of ancient sins.*

*Its slaves give him many names, most of them which are too disturbing to be spoken aloud.*

*No matter. It is still Decay.*

*It is the taint which brings more dangerous diseases and will transform insignificant sneezes into terrible pandemics.*

*It is the disintegration of Order.*

*It is the maw which does its utmost to rot the foundations of civilisation.*

*It feeds itself of our denials, our insecurities, and of course our fear of death.*

*Some of my advisors and friends once remarked that by that logic, the Orks are perhaps the only species to be immune to its corrupting influence.*

*But is it really the case?*

*The greenskins, for all the murderous danger they represent, have decayed too.*

*The Krorks are gone, and the twin brutes created to shape the sum of knowledge and skills of the warmongering race have decayed as a consequence.*

*Or perhaps you want to speak of the Necrons?*

*Their bodies are built in a metal which resists corrosion and rust very well, I will freely admit that.*

*But the technology supposed to protect what is left of their minds is not so perfect.*

*The Imperial commanders who fought at Mandragora and on the Ymga Monolith acknowledged this point and exploited it mercilessly.*

*Should we speak of the Eldar?*

*The majority of the Craftworlds and the planets they have left are pale shadows of their ancient Empire. During the late thirtieth millennium, the evidence of their ancient civilisation was more often than not presented to my eyes in the form of ruins and crumbling psychic archeotech.*

*Excess was the death of the depraved Empire, but Decay made sure the burial was long and agonising.*

*And of course, there is the Imperium.*

*My creation.*

*My greatest failure.*

*It was supposed to be a magnificent light banishing the darkness.*

*Look at what it has become.*

*It is the rotting carcass of hope. It is the ugly bastard child of necessity, arrogance, and fear.*

*It was never supposed to be like this.*

*I can sense my sons’ dismay, no matter how far I am from them.*

*It is unsurprising. In many ways, they never truly faced Decay where it is strongest.*

*Oh, they have fought the Hordes of Pestilence and Plagues.*

*They have seen what happened to the Death Guard.*

*They have seen how resentment and anger can poison you and fester, until you are nothing more than a puppet for the vile parasite waiting at heart of the Decay Garden.*

*But they have not fought Decay like I did.*

*They have not waged a secret war in the shadows to push for new inventions, to convince human minds that setbacks are not a permanent defeat. Technology and knowledge can be lost momentarily, but our species is curious and tenacious.*

*They have not walked knee-deep into the ashes of the Federation’s capital, and cried the death of trillions, while the laughter of the pestilence parasite echoed across the Warp.*

*This was a terrible defeat humanity has suffered. The catastrophic daemonic onslaughts and the rampages of the Lost and the Damned ended with the damnation of uncountable souls.*

*But the most grievous calamity was the rotting of the ideals. The rotting of* my *ideals. The perversion of the dream we could be one day be* free*.*

*It is still no reason to succumb to despair.*

*The damage done by four thousand years of delusion is enormous, but it can be reversed.*

*Chaos can be defeated.*

*And if Slaanesh could be killed, then it just means that there is a way to kill Nurgle too. I just have to find it.*

*In the mean time, I will just have to settle to listen to its shrieks of fury when it will discover how badly he underestimated Taylor Hebert.*

**Ultima Segmentum**

**Nyx Sector**

**Nyx System**

**Nyx**

**Somewhere in the south of the Dolos Continent**

**Somewhere well below the surface**

**The Hope Beacon – in construction**

**2.912.312M35**

**Liandra of Caledor**

On the surface, the sight had been less than impressive. There had been a few Domes, some troop barracks, and a few installations to make sure the local soldiers didn’t get too bored.

This changed once you used the secret lifts, and they were so well hidden Liandra had missed them at first.

There was no indication how deep the lift had descended into the entrails of the planet, but it couldn’t be a small distance; otherwise the psychic emissions would have betrayed them, Moths or not.

Once there, the spectacle was worth the time she had spent waiting for most of two days.

It wasn’t the size of a Webway City.

But it wasn’t for lack of trying.

Liandra was no poet, except when it came to warfare and duelling; she had no lyrics to describe it in eloquent Aeldari terms.

So in blunter words, it was like watching an anthill being built before your eyes.

With the additional point in favour of that being that there had to be millions of ants of all sizes here.

It was likely an underestimation.

There were insects arriving and leaving every instant through Titan-sized tunnels, and the construction site was half-hidden by pillars which looked like they had been carved from the bones of the planets by the will of a God.

It was a cavern whose construction had begun very recently, and yet, Liandra was sure that few races would have been able to accomplish a building effort of that magnitude in one century or two.

To accomplish that, the construction force was not limited to ants. There were quantities of insects, ranging from the tiny beetles to the more respectable tunnel-diggers the Imperium called ‘Ambulls’, and then there were more gigantic assets, up to the Titan-Moths purifying regularly the cavern.

Between the clouds and columns of arachnids and other coordinators, there were the metallic humans covered in red robes, but they remained a small number, surrounded by the relentless Swarm.

“I’m impressed, my Empress. I didn’t think you would be able to keep something of that magnitude a secret from everyone.”

“Oh, there are many souls outside who have been informed,” the reply came after two heartbeats, “they may not know of certain details, however.”

“Preparations to build a new site if there is a problem with this one?”

“Yes, though the factor I had to find a way to transport all the food here to feed my Swarm played a more important role at the beginning. We planted some mega-cacti, but for a project of that size, Catachan-ants and the Ambulls would rapidly starve if they had only a diet of cactus juice to replenish their strength.”

“Hmm...a good point, my Empress. Logistics, I must admit, were never my strongest area of interest.”

For this admission, she received a snort.

“Why I am not surprised? Artemis, we are going to the Resonatum Ring.”

“Yes, Webmistress! The Custodes just departed-“

“It is fine. This is more inspection and...preparatory work today.”

“As you say, Webmistress! Hestia is on her way...but you already know that.”

If the security measures had been high before, they paled to those waiting for them now. The tunnel they walked into was big enough to tolerate the presence of a few human-made giant walkers, and the red-robed auxiliaries had done exactly that, deploying two of their ‘Knights’, in addition as usual to the tens of thousands of battle-insects obeying the will of Empress Weaver.

Then there were the adamantium doors.

Liandra felt respect for the insects. Bring here the gates had to be a tremendous chore by itself.

There was a long list of protections, most of them conceived to make sure no one among their group, be it Liandra or any of the Space Marines, was an impostor.

And at last they were introduced to the ‘Ring’.

The name was appropriate, in a way.

The large tunnel, once ‘poked’ via a psychic probe, would indeed form a magnificent ring into the depths of the planet once it was complete.

It was not the case now.

Though to be fair to the big golden spider and her large swarm being busy shaping, re-shaping, and polishing stone after stone, the precision required was astronomically high.

Without the Empress, all of it would have had to be done by other means, and Liandra knew it would have taken far, far longer to deliver a fraction of the performance.

As for the purpose of the whole project?

It was not that difficult to have a guess the moment she saw the three large Aethergold Pylons already emplaced inside the incomplete ‘Ring’.

“You are building an Aetheric Engine.”

“Indeed.” Her Empress saw clearly no reason to obfuscate the truth.

“Your Empire has already a lighthouse.”

“One,” the ruler of Nyx agreed, “and it was not built recently. It is a dangerous weakness.”

On that point, Liandra nodded.

The pretense was discarded, and the former Blood Muse watched the ‘Ring’ with determined eyes.

Evidently, not all the Pylons which would end up in this ‘Resonatum Ring’ were here today. It was likely they would end up with ten or twelve, and that was assuming there weren’t more which would be stored as potential replacement parts.

It was hardly surprising, given how recent the humans had started to recognise the sheer potential of Noctilith use for their grand projects.

No, there was something else-

Ah.

“You need Wraithbone to ‘connect’ the different Pylons.” She didn’t even pretend it was a question.

“I do.” The golden wings were unfurled and grew larger, and the Pylons seemed to react to it as a consequence.

For anyone else, Liandra would already have told them that this seer power wasn’t meant to be replicated very often. Assuredly, her Empress would be able to build more than one, unlike the Beacon of Pain the Human Emperor was trapped and bounded to.

But it would still be a limited number, and consequences to build too many of them wouldn’t be pleasant. The Warp was more than the realm of Chaos, in the end. It was a realm where your soul was reflected, and there was only so much light you could use as illumination.

“In that case, there may be a problem.” The former High Priestess of Khaine admitted reluctantly.

“I was under the impression the Queen of Blades taught you the art of the Bonesingers.”

“She did.” Liandra said defensively. “And I have to say, without modesty, that I am very good at it.”

“What is the problem, then?” At least the Angel of Sacrifice was smirking...

“I am capable to create high-quality Wraithbone, as I said.” The former Apprentice to Aenaria Eldanesh spoke. “But I am not working fast. While the ‘Ring’ is still incomplete, I have a good idea how wide and long it is going to be in the end. If you want a flawless work of ten connections between two Pylons, I think I can do it in twelve to fourteen of your ‘Terran years’.”

Since there were more than two Pylons to connect by Sacrifice-imbued Wraithbone, clearly, the final time to complete this resonance chamber would be multiplied by ten easily.

The other parts of the Aetheric Engine were clearly less complicated and would largely be ready in time by then.

“This is, naturally, assuming you work alone.”

“Yes, my Empress. But you kind of need me if you want Sacrifice-imbued Wraithbone at the end of the process.” Liandra was not going to say she knew her Empress perfectly, because it would have been ridiculous and untrue. But the alternative was using the Eldaneshi *children*, for they were protected by Sacrifice, and that she was sure the Queen of the Swarm would never do.

“True. That said, would it possible for you to act as a...relay for different Bonesingers? They would create the Wraithbone to your specifications, and you would coordinate and imbue the Wraithbone. In a way, you would be the equivalent of one of my Adjutant-Spiders, except for threads of Wraithbone, not of silk.”

Liandra blinked and considered the matter for a long period of time.

“This...this could work, my Empress.” She answered at last. “I will need some highly-skilled Bonesingers to perfect the process, however. The average Crafter who has been trained for a hundred cycles won’t be enough for this kind of task. I will need some real ‘artists of the Wraithbone’.”

It was a silent question which was asked: did the Destroyer of Commorragh want to reveal the existence of this underground facility to more Eldaneshi, given how many obfuscation efforts had been done to keep it a secret?

“Speak with Aurelia Malys, please. Ask her...ask her hypothetically, how much it would cost me to find and hire ten highly-skilled Bonesingers for the better part of a year.”

“Yes, my Empress. And if I am forced to give a name?”

“My spiders have started to call it the ‘Hope Beacon’. I think you can mention it to the Herald of Atharti...but only to her.”

“By your will, it shall be done,” Liandra replied earnestly.