**Disaster at Phall**

**Chapter 2**

**The Siege of Lesser Damantyne**

**Ultima Segmentum**

**Damantyne System**

**007M31**

**Warsmith Idriss Krendl, 246th Day of the Lesser Damantyne Siege**

Idriss Krendl had not believed there would be one man he would hate more than the False-Emperor when the magnitude of the crimes done by the Tyrant had been revealed by Warmaster Horus.

Now he knew this conviction had been premature.

The hate he felt for Barabas Dantioch – he would not dignify this cripple with the title of Warsmith – was overwhelming and largely surpassed all the hate he felt toward the Monster of Terra.

Dantioch was a defeated idiot and a coward. He had abandoned his post and ruined the plans of the Primarch. Exile had been the least Perturabo could command for the leadership leading to this disaster. By all rights, the cripple should have kissed his feet and thanked him to let him rejoin the Legion in their glorious march to Terra.

With the ammunition stores, the promethium reserves and the war supplies built in these underground caverns, Idriss would have seized entire Sectors and went from triumph to triumph. He could have risen to the Trident and earned the favour of Perturabo Himself!

But this imbecile had ruined it all by refusing to accept the perfidy of the False-Emperor!

The urge to rip apart something, anything, was tremendous. For the last twenty-six standard hours, the Warsmith of the 14th Great Company could not feel anything but hate. He had to feel hate. It was hate or this terrible pain which had come with the certainty their Primarch had perished.

It was Dantioch’s fault. If the cripple had obeyed like a good little failure, the 14th great Company would have been by the Primarch’s side and Perturabo would be alive.

That was the greatest sin of this traitor, but there was worse. As the Fourth Legion’s assault on the ‘Schadenhold’ fortress had fallen apart and Astartes lost their minds to pain and vengeance, hidden batteries had revealed their presence and slaughtered his lines. His Space Marines, reeling under the shock of their father’s death, had either been in a comatose state or charged like berserkers of the Twelfth.

This moment of absolute despair and morale collapse had not lasted long, perhaps thirty seconds. But it had touched the quasi-totality of his Astartes here, save the Sons of Horus, and most of those hadn’t been on the front lines. Dantioch, may his crippled carcass finish in the stomach of a barbed-anaconda, had seized this opportunity to counter-attack and inflict devastating casualties.

“How much did we lose?” He asked with glacial loathing to his new chief of staff Captain Terexys Jor while not stopping his walk on the bridge of the *Benthos*.

“The advances of the last fifty days have been...”

The hate came back like a relief and consumed everything. Idriss Krendl slammed his fist through the rib cage of a mortal next to him and repeated in a loud growl.

“HOW. MUCH. DID. WE. LOSE?”

“The 14th Great Company lost over seven hundred Astartes and two hundred more are heavily injured and can’t fight for the next twenty days. We have lost six Titans, two Ordinatus, three thousand tanks, sixty Stormbirds and forty Thunderhawks. The Nadir-Maru 4th Juntarians of the Imperial Army companies have...”

“The fate of weak mortals doesn’t concern me,” interrupted the Warsmith. “They will obey their betters or they will suffer the consequences.”

“With all due respect, Warsmith, they have already paid the consequences. In two hundred and forty-seven days, we have used them as las-fodder and their organisation is falling apart. Of the two million-plus men we sent in the caverns, the rate of casualties has to be close to forty percent...”

He had given an order. Why was it so difficult for them to obey his commands?

“Consider yourself relieved, Captain,” he snarled. “Remove yourself from my presence, and prepare your Thunderhawk for a rapid insertion below. You are reassigned with the mortals. If you care so much about them, you can bleed with them.”

It took the killing of ten mortals and two standard hours for the hate to go and the Warsmith of the 14th Great Company to return to the equations of war. New analysis of his hololithic devices and reports told him the situation was worse than it had been at first sight. Of the seventy-two God-Engines he had sent in the acid rains of this abominable Death World, five remained and all, including the Imperator-class *Omnia Victrum*, demanded constant reparations to have a tiny fraction of their usual operational capability. One thousand and nine hundred Iron Warriors were dead, and hundreds of priceless progenoid glands had been destroyed or were in the hands of Dantioch and his Traitors. It was a quantity of gene-seed which was more precious than pure adamantium, now that their Father was lost.

The litany of disaster didn’t stop there. The God-Engines were a shadow of their former muster, and the Fourth had over eight hundred wounded unable to fight for twenty more days. The Mechanicus and the mortals had to be motivated with summary executions and change in their command structure. To resume the assault, he would have to commit most of his reserves to resume the offensive. He would have preferred for the mortals to soak up the fire of Dantioch’s genebreed bastard-clones, but mortals would never be able to take the Schadenhold, that much had been proven in the first hundred days of the siege.

No, this time the assault would not fail. With one Emperor and Four Warlord for long-range bombardment support, a million of mortals and three thousand and five hundred of his elite Iron Warriors, he was going to break this fortress and crush the head of the traitor between his fists. Nothing else was acceptable.

“Transmit the order to the Captains we are going to operate on Plan Black-Three,” Krendl told the Sergeant which had replaced his useless chief of staff – the third to prove his incompetence since the start of the siege.

“You will want to belay this order,” Idriss Krendl turned his head to face the familiar voice. Captain Hasdrubal Serapis, Emissary of the Warmaster, had arrived and was standing next to the section of primary communications. As everyone save him wore the colours of the Fourth Legion, the Captain of the Sons of Horus appeared like an anomaly with his ugly green colours on the *Benthos*. “We have just received new orders.”

“New orders?” Idriss watched the hololith representing the space around the Damantyne System, and indeed there was a lone destroyer which had just made his Warp-translation into real space. “By whose authority?”

“The Warmaster,” steadily replied his emissary. “I don’t know if my Father is aware yours is dead, but I can tell you there are many in High Command who are growing impatient at the idea of this siege drawing endlessly.”

“I may have underestimated the defences of the Schadenhold, but only the death of our Primarch has prevented us from breaking this fortress apart!” the Warsmith did his best to hid his loathing behind defiance. It always was like this with the other Legions, in the end. They refused to come down and help them fight in the siege lines, but they were always too prompt to seize the glory which didn’t belong to them. “I will soon have control of this fortress and the fuel production facilities.”

“Obviously, the Warmaster does not share your optimism,” replied the Captain of the 80th Company of the Sons of Horus. “Reinforcements are on their way according to this message.”

The son of the Warmaster paused for a second of dramatic effect before continuing.

“You will keep leadership over your Grand Company and receive four hundred additional Astartes. I will have three hundred more Sons of Horus, and your mangled Nadir-Maru 4th Juntarians will have the By-Nyssal Equerries of the Imperial Army, 2nd Bull Janissaries and the 6th Crescent Sabres to teach them the meaning of resilience and relentless attack. The Legio Argentum will be able to stop and repair as new machines of the Lords of Ruins and several Ordinatus Minoris are sent to the Damantyne System.”

“Who is getting overall command?” Idriss gritted his teeth, his dreams of rising higher in the Warmaster’s favour burning as this new humiliation became clear.

“Lord Commander Cyrius of the Sixth Millennial, Warsmith.”

Idriss was glad he had helmet on his face, for the smile he made would not have been to the taste of the Warmaster’s Emissary and his precious Sons of Horus. So the Emperor’s Children wanted to take the Schadenhold for themselves, didn’t they?

“I obey the wisdom of the Warmaster,” and he would laugh as these preening peacocks were told the subtleties of siege warfare.

**Tetrarch Tauro Nicodemus, 258th Day of the Lesser Damantyne Siege**

“So they have been reinforced.”

The voice of Warsmith Barabas Dantioch was weary as usual, but Tauro had learned to hear the nuances in the raspy elocutions. There was deep satisfaction underneath.

This satisfaction was wholly deserved, in the Ultramarine’s opinion. Each Astartes, each man, each tank, each Stormbird, each Titan which was sent here to bleed and die in the caverns of Lesser Damantyne would be missed by the Traitors for their march on Terra. With thirty Iron Warriors and a ridiculously small amount of manpower, the Loyalist Iron Warriors had inflicted severe losses to their former brothers, the Titans of the Legio Argentum and their auxiliaries of the Imperial Army.

“Yes, they are,” he confirmed. “I talked with our scouts and inspected the long-range augurs myself before coming. Either Krendl had far more Astartes and Titans our worst estimations gave him, or he has been reinforced considerably. Colonel Kruishank is sure they have brought fifteen new Titans and three Ordinatus. Fresh Iron Warriors companies are taking the field, and for the first time the Sons of Horus have decided to accompany them. As for the Imperial Army, the banners of the By-Nyssal Equerries and the Crescent Sabres have been observed. I can only conclude they are going to launch a new offensive in less than five standard hours.”

“I agree,” said the Space Marine who had the determination and the courage to tell the truth to an unworthy Primarch. “But then they will learn we have not stayed idle in the twelve days they gave us.”

Tauro Nicodemus of Ultramar found himself nodding. When the resonance of Perturabo’s death had shattered the assault of the attackers, the Schadenhold’s outer defences had not been broken, but they were close from letting the waves of heretics and traitors entering the inner corridors. This would not have meant victory of course, as thousands of bunkers, traps and cannons awaited them, but it would have been the beginning of the end.

In twelve standard days, under the peerless command of Dantioch, humans, genebreed creations, Adepts of the Mechanicus and Loyal Iron Warriors had rebuilt the outer defences with a rapidity and a facility Tauro found amazing. If he had not seen it with his own eyes, he wouldn’t have believed it.

And the ‘Sons of Dantioch’ with their Iron Warrior commanders had not been content to simply rebuild. New stratagems had been implemented. The ground-pumps had been replaced and lakes of promethium had been poured in the caverns, ready to be set aflame the moment the defenders needed it. Damaged cannons had been removed from their initial positions, repaired and then returned to new optimised turrets. Minefields had been spread following a new pattern the survivors of the first waves would not be able to predict. In the darkness of Lesser Damantyne, soldiers had become workers and toiled without protest to restore the defences and make the Schadenhold more redoubtable than it had been at the beginning of the Siege. New kill grounds had been created and new lethal surprises were waiting to be fired.

“In a few hours we will know,” Barabas Dantioch told him, “if they have learned something from their failures and the doctrine my deceased genitor smashed in their iron skulls.”

It was only half an hour later the magnitude of the reinforcements struck in, as new Stormbirds, Thunderhawks and Legion-issued tanks with defaced decorations and garish pink-purple colours struck the defences like a hurricane.

“I would not have believed Krendl would seek the help of the Third Legion to break a siege.”

“Maybe it wasn’t his choice,” suggested the Ultramarine Champion as he saw new tides of fresh troops die in the outer minefields. There had to be hundreds of thousands fresh guardsmen below, and most of these soldiers had not been fighting the first two hundred-plus days of the Siege.

“Maybe,” grunted Dantioch. “Tell the Angeloi Adamantiphracts to begin Contingency Olympia.”

Tauro Nicodemus grimaced. He was not going to pity the traitors on the other side. They were Traitors, Heretics and madmen, and from the information he had been able to learn, the command of Dantioch was not the first Loyalist garrison they wanted to exterminate. But what was about to happen was not going to be pretty, even by Great Crusade-standards.

“Let’s study the effects of Phosphex shells when we explode them on a sea of promethium...”

**Warsmith Idriss Krendl, 300th Day of the Lesser Damantyne Siege**

The Siege was disaster made flesh. From his command bridge on the God-Machine *Omnia Victrum*, Idriss consulted the last wave of losses assaulting his command. Dantioch pet monsters had opened a new cavern by a series of explosions, resulting in the death of hundreds and the arrival of tank-sized carnivorous ants on the battlefield. So far, six Iron Warriors and over five thousand Sabres had perished.

The Warsmith glared with hate at the Schadenhold fortress twelve kilometres in the distance. By the ashes of Olympia, what was necessary to take this citadel? The cripple has less than fifty Iron Warriors, a few thousand mortals and some degenerate mortals! Such a force could not hold against the might of a Grand Battalion, Titans and armies of the Imperial Army!

Except the events had proved the impossible was not so impossible after all. Idriss Krendl had to avoid thinking more and more about the talent in defensive warfare shown by his enemy. If Dantioch was able to do this, crippled and starved of resources, how could he have lost against the Hrud following their Father’s orders?

“The Jiraxis Company has been hit hard by the last explosions. They need reinforcements.”

“Where are the Sons of Horus? They were supposed to support them!”

“There was a nuclear blast a few seconds ago...I don’t think we can count on them anymore....”

Hour after hour, this was what the Siege of Lesser Damantyne brought. A hole of murder and kill-boxes, impregnable positions after impregnable positions built to eviscerate Astartes, mortals and everything living. Tides of promethium were released at irregular intervals before being set aflame. Melta landmines exploded, crippling for all eternity his forces. Razorwire by the kilometre was tearing apart flesh, bone, ceramite and alloy. There was no counting the number of bunkers and kill zones. Thousands had been neutralised, but there were tens of thousands more.

And on top of this, there was the voice of the bastard son of Guilliman, taking psychological warfare to a new level. Every moment of the night and day, the Legionary of the Thirteenth blared his defiance, screaming by vox on all frequencies how the heretical soldiers of the Warmaster were going to die in atrocious manners.

Much less as he didn’t want to admit it, Idriss Krendl knew the effect on the mortals was awful. Iron Warriors shrugged this crude attempt to inspire fear, but the guardsmen were at the breaking point. In over three hundred days, the Nadir-Maru 4th Juntarians of the Imperial Army for all intent and purposes didn’t exist anymore. The few who were still breathing were in the rear or spread across the new units. Many of the men had been brutes and criminals, but the Siege had hammered their minds and bodies until nothing was left to give. He had been forced to detach several of his subordinates to act as discipline officers and ensure the moves ordered were those happening in reality.

“Are there any more orders from the Emperor’s Children?”

“No, Warsmith.”

“What is the drug-addict spawn of Fulgrim doing?” he snarled.

There was no answer from his Captains, not that he had been expecting one.

The initial assault of the Sixth Millennial forty-two days ago had been a massacre. No, massacre had been too gentle a word. The Emperor’s Children offensive had been annihilated. The guns of the Schadenhold had waited the very last instant to open fire, and fifty Stormbirds had been resulted to incinerated hulks in a sublime crescendo of explosions. On the ground, the Imperial Army and the tanks had burned in phosphex and hellishly-hot promethium.

Lord Commander Cyrius had sent over three hundred Astartes of his thousand-plus complement in the hell of the Siege and more than one hundred thousand mortals. One standard day later, most of these forces were dead and the brutal stalemate had resumed.

Five days ago, they had breached the outer defences and penetrated in the Schadenhold itself. Serapis had affirmed victory was close. Idriss had not even had the strength to tell him he was an idiot. The more they fought, the more it was evident Dantioch had established a monstrous number of contingencies to bleed them and delay the March on Terra.

The Schadenhold was killing Iron Warriors at a rate they couldn’t afford. The same was true for the God-Engines and their lesser cousins. Ten more Titans and two Ordinatus Minoris had been destroyed either in the acidic super-storms outside or in the traps the enemy had prepared for them.

Evidently, Cyrius had not reacted like a proper officer. The Lord Commander had retreated on his massive Leviathan and let his insane Captains try to understand how to salvage something from this disaster. The Warsmith of the 14th Grand Battalion curled his lips in distaste. The Emperor’s Children had always been arrogant bastards, good with their blades and obsessed with ‘perfection’. There was no denying they had been a good Legion, however. But it had been when they were wearing the double-eagle of the Aquila and the Imperial purple. The new version of the Emperor’s Children was a mockery of the Legions, a depraved thing wearing a pink-purple monstrosity, human skins, smoking drugs so powerful it was a wonder some remembered their names and they pushed herds of mutants before them.

Idriss had understood things had been bad on the black sands of Isstvan V, but he had begun to realise since the arrival of the Sixth Millennial the problems were severely underestimated.

The Emperor’s Children were a mass of warriors with sonic-based weaponry and drugs, and the Warsmith was not sure they qualified as Legionaries anymore. Once Dantioch was dead, he would abandon these ‘allies’ gladly.

“Exploit the breach in Sector H-56. Send the By-Nyssal Equerries in the vanguard.”

“Yes, Warsmith,” replied a Lieutenant as the Titans and the Ordinatus fired again, their devastating batteries hammering the Schadenhold with less than impressive results.

They were going to win. Anything else was simply unconceivable. For himself. For the Legion. For their defunct Father. For the Warmaster.

He was going to rip apart this traitor of Dantioch, torture him until the cripple acknowledged he was his Warsmith and then regain strength and influence as they marched on terra and killed the False-Emperor.

“Warsmith, a new bunker has been vaporised in Sector A-12...losses are heavy and reinforcements are...”

They were going to kill Barabas Dantioch. The servants of the False-Emperor could not afford to have such a fortress-builder on their side. And never mind the hundreds of thousands mortals it would take to arrive to this outcome.

**Warsmith Barabas Dantioch, 383rd Day of the Lesser Damantyne Siege**

The Schadenhold was going to fall.

Dantioch had accepted this fact from the moment the Siege had begun. His command was self-sufficient in food, ammunition and fortress-building, but the rapport of strength had been rather overwhelming in the other side’s favour.

He had an excellent defensive position, a Death World which wanted to kill every human on its surface and his ‘sons’ ready to die for him.

But thirty Iron Warriors against six thousand couldn’t hope to prevail.

The death of Perturabo had offered a brief moment of hope. Barabas had been weary and utterly exhausted when it had happened, but he remembered the moment like it was one minute ago. He remembered the pain given by the link to their gene-sire...and in this moment he knew he had been right all along to say the truth to Perturabo.

The Tyrant of Olympia was not omniscient. He was not all-knowing. And he was as far removed from perfection as it was possible to be.

Loyalty had its rewards, and Dantioch could affirm to his brothers their cause was just and their oaths to the Emperor would stay true until the stars themselves died.

The equation of war was not in their favour, both on Lesser Damantyne and the galaxy at large. Horus had destroyed several Loyal Legions and the majority of the Fourth had turned Traitor. But with Perturabo turned Traitor, hope remained.

Under Apothecary Lomium, hundreds of progenoid glands had been harvested from the traitors in the first phase of the siege. A modest tribute of geneseed, but without the Primarch, Dantioch felt sure it was one they could transport to Terra and build the roots of a new Legion, one which would be known for its loyalty and resistance against their traitor brothers.

It was a faint hope, but it was all Dantioch could offer the soul of the Legion Perturabo had murdered when he had taken command and decimated them.

And it was why he was now arming the charges of the explosives sunken deep in the foundations of the Schadenhold. Then he opened all vox-hailers and all frequencies.

“Idriss Krendl,” the Warsmith hissed, “*Captain*, this your Warsmith. I know you are there, somewhere in or close to my fortress. I know you knelt before traitors, consorted with mutants and abominations and waited patiently until the God-Engines of the Collegia Titanica and the Imperial Army had done the dirty work. You may rejoice from your victory a last time, *Captain*. In this life or any other, this fortress I built will never side the renegade Warmaster or the corpse of our genitor. I was wrong to tell you that the Schadenhold will never fall, it will...and on your heads!”

The communication was cut before any answer was made and with one activation, the crippled Warsmith, the last Iron Warriors, the body of Venerable Vastopol, a lone Ultramarine and the progenoid cargo were teleported away.

The ‘Warmaster emissary’ should really have searched his transport once he had come back to the *Benthos*...because now Dantioch was going to use the beacon aboard to teleport in orbit and take control of the Grand Cruiser.

For a second, he felt regret at the idea of not being able to assist to the end of the Siege by himself...and then he was gone.

**Warsmith Idriss Krendl, 383rd Day of the Lesser Damantyne Siege**

In a single instant, Idriss Krendl understood how badly they had miscalculated. The bridge of the Titan was a magnificent platform of observation, and he had a direct view on the ruined Schadenhold.

The detonations on the ceiling were perfectly visible and couldn’t be mistaken for anything else.

Dantioch had killed them all.

Idriss had calculated the weight of the rock protuberance supporting the enemy fortress like the Iron Warriors calculated everything else. It was close to seventeen trillion tonnes, give it or take it. Add a few thousand tonnes for the fortifications and the False-Emperor architecture.

The energy created by the impact of this gargantuan projectile impacting the cavern floor was not hard to process.

The void shields of an Imperator-class God-Engine were nothing compared to that.

Nothing could survive this impact at ground zero and nearly the tire army was there or worse, in the fortress which was beginning to collapse over their heads.

“Dantioch! If you hear me, know that I will hunt you for all eternity, dead or not dead! I will kill you, even if I have to come back from death to do it!”

The thousands of corpses were the first to fall, as the ground and the ceiling rumbled in apocalyptic earthquakes and blood poured in cascades.

The rest was a gigantic mountain fall upon their heads, and thousands of voices screaming in terror. The *Omnia Victrum* fired at maximum power on the incoming cataclysm...and then there was only darkness, pain and the laughter of demons.