



A LEGION ACCURSED: THE NIGHT LORDS AT THRAMAS

'It is neither the great deeds we perform in battle nor the wise words we utter in peace that shape us, but rather the hidden things we choose to undertake in the dark while none can see that define us.'

Attr. Konrad Curze, carved into the walls of his prison on Cheraut

A LEGION ACCURSED

The Night Lords were a Legion set upon a course that would lead them inevitably to their destruction, a course whose origin could be found on distant Terra and the inscrutable plans of the Emperor, but that would see its bitter end among the dim stars of the Eastern Fringe. As was fitting for a Legion of such ill-repute and terrible mien, it would not go meekly to meet this ordained fate nor accept without bloodshed an end to the path they had chosen to walk. Amid the turmoil and destruction of the Horus Heresy the first signs of that which awaited them would appear, heralded by the Night Haunter himself, and the Legion would turn upon itself in an orgy of violence in an effort to sever itself from the curse of its Primarch. This was not the end that they stumbled ever closer too, that the Night Haunter had seen in a thousand cursed dreams, but merely a foretaste of the horror that was to come. For despite the grim fervour with which they struggled, the Night Lords sought the wrong foes for their rage, choosing to blame a corruption they saw within their own ranks as though it had been brought to them from the outside. Instead, the curse they sought to end had ever lived at the heart of the Legion, a blight that had festered in the place that it had been set by the Emperor's own hand, in aid of plans incomprehensible to the minds of mere mortals – the Night Haunter himself.

Afflicted by the curse of seeing but a fragment of the foresight that guided his gene-father, Konrad Curze had seen the grim possibility that waited for him and his sons on the far side of the Horus Heresy. Once he had sought to fight that possibility, to struggle against the future hoping that his dark dreams would clear, that the blood he shed and the lives he had claimed would be enough to shift the path of the future ever so slightly. That the dreams that had haunted his mind, the visions of a dark and terrible future would clear and be replaced, that he might find a place in the empire his father sought to build among the stars. Yet even after Horus shattered the course of the Emperor's plans and remade the future of the Imperium itself, his vision remained constant and unchanging, a curse that he came to believe was inevitable and immovable. That all the struggle and death had been in vain, that it had meant nothing worked on the mind of the Primarch in a manner more catastrophic than the cut of any blade, a

wound that no chirurgeon could mend. Thus, by the time of the Thramas Crusade he had come to embrace his doom, to revel in the futility of his existence and the bleak truth he thought he had discovered.

The Outriders of Rebellion

Outwardly, the Night Lords began the Horus Heresy as a strong force in the host of the Warmaster, a Legion tempered by war and set in its own grudge against the Loyalist cause. The imprisonment of Curze prior to the destruction of Nostramo and the subsequent incident with Rogal Dorn were seen by many among the Traitors to grant the Night Haunter their trust. Knowing this, Horus sought to put the Night Lords to use in the vanguard of his plans and in the wake of the destruction of the Dropsite Massacre, Horus had set them to the tasks he had woven for the Emperor's demise. For the Night Lords, the Warmaster set the task of running at the forefront of his host, inciting fear and unrest among those worlds yet undecided in their loyalties. By the point of the Night Lords' skinning knives Horus would show these worlds the cost of his animosity, and to those who chose to bend the knee before him, he would grant his protection and a relief from the predations of his servants.

As the harbingers of the Traitors and the emissaries of Horus' Dark Compliance, the Night Lords would usher dozens of systems into the growing empire of Horus, each cowed by the knowledge of the horrors that had befallen those who refused. Within the space of a few short months most of the northern reaches was under the Traitors' control, a stable base from which Horus could prepare his assault on the Imperium's heart and one that could not function with a blight like the Night Lords running rampant within its borders. For in every minor drop in production and each misfortune that befell the newly-conquered worlds, the Night Haunter saw the most dire of treacheries and meted out the only punishment he knew: death in its most terrible form. Such a scourge soon proved more damaging to the amassing of munitions and arms than it was beneficial to the enforced loyalty of the conquered.

That which had begun on Terra as a force that shaped cruelty into a tool had become in some cases little more than an undisciplined mob that saw cruelty as the goal and not the means. It was no longer the precise weapon that the Legions had been envisioned to be,

but rather an indiscriminate scourge that sought to sate its thirst on any that crossed its path. Left to its own devices and the ever-darkening wishes of its master, the Night Lords would surely have proved a thorn in Horus' careful preparations, and so the Warmaster granted them a new task, one that would see their unique talents put to good use. As they had in the north so would they serve in the east, as the harbingers of the dark empire and the will of Horus. They would bring new territories and new sources of power and resources into the fold of the Traitors, strengthening the growing armada that Horus intended to unleash upon Terra.

An Empire Built on Fear

Upon the dim stars of the Nostramo sector, Horus would first unleash the Night Lords. Those worlds that had once bent the knee to the Night Haunter, before his sudden departure from Imperium space in the years after Cheraut and the destruction of Nostramo, would once again face the judgement of the Night Haunter. Consisting of nearly a hundred inhabited systems, many including long-established and heavily populated hive worlds, the Nostramo sector remained a valuable recruiting and manufacturing hub for the Traitor forces, even after the destruction of its capital world. Here could be found in abundance desperate and bitter souls to take up arms in the name of the Warmaster and prosecute his wars against a distant Terra that had long dictated their trials and misfortunes, and whose labour could be swiftly turned to the service of Horus' growing hosts. In form it was perfectly suited to the rebels and ripe for the taking, owing as it did little fealty or allegiance to any Loyalist faction or warlord, the Night Haunter, seen from without, the perfect tool for its conquest. This would be a rare error in judgement by Horus, for the Night Haunter would prove ill suited to the task he was assigned.

Long had the worlds that surrounded now-dead Nostramo suffered under the rule of the Night Haunter. His stringent and unforgiving code of law had enforced a dreary life of suffering and toil upon those who served him, with any infraction, no matter how insignificant, punished by maiming or death. While it had maintained a brutal form of order, it had done so by means of a fear so ingrained that it had begun to eat away at the souls of those who dwelt under its burden, the suppressed sins of its people a threat overlooked by their old masters. With the Night Haunter's

absence during the final years of the Great Crusade this threat would come to the fore, with many of the worlds of that far sector overthrowing the tyrannical regimes forced upon them by the Night Lords and reverting to the anarchic ways of their past. Corrupt syndicates and brutal gangs took control of cities and worlds, indulging in all that Konrad Curze had forbidden and bringing a more chaotic terror to the weak that dwelt on those benighted worlds.

The syndicates that rose up to take control would have proved just as capable of fulfilling Horus' needs as any more legitimate government, but to the Night Haunter they were an affront to all he stood for, a blight upon the realm he had killed so many to establish. Where others among the Traitors' ranks might have accepted the allegiance of the new overlords of the sector, co-opting their strength to serve the Warmaster, the Night Haunter sought a path of his own. As the Night Lords' main fleet arrived in the sector, the Syndarchs of

the Blood Moon syndicate gathered on the isolated world of Kehdure IV to pledge their loyalty to Konrad Curze, expecting only to cede some measure of their wealth to his new rebellion, confident he would not wish their territories plunged into chaos when they could offer a ready bounty of men and munitions. Instead, they would find the Night Haunter descending upon them with the sole intent of ending their lives, without regard as to what tribute he might otherwise reap by accepting their pledge, and leaving Kehdure IV a broken and bloodied world, its few inhabitants little more than collateral damage to the slaughter.

The Dark King

Though much has been made in the pages of history of the battles on Isstvan V being the first conflict between the Emperor's Primarchs, it is not strictly true. There exists a single instance of a Primarch turning upon one of his brothers and meting out grievous injury to them that predates both the conflict in Isstvan and that on Prospero. That Konrad Curze sits at the heart of this incident, long concealed from historians in the archives of the Imperial Palace, should elicit little surprise from those that knew of that troubling son of the Emperor.

This occurred in the aftermath of the long and bloody Cheraut Compliance, a conflict that saw elements of the Emperor's Children, Imperial Fists and the Night Lords deployed to bring a particularly stubborn lost clade of humanity under the rule of the Imperium. All three of the Legion Primarchs were present, a rare occurrence in those hectic days of conquest and expansion, with little common ground to be found between Dorn and Curze in the prosecution of the war. By the end of the fighting, Curze's brutal methods and the indiscriminate slaughter he committed to pacify the defeated people of Cheraut had brought the relationship between those two disparate brothers to a razor's edge of bitterness. A confrontation between the two Primarchs quickly escalated from angry words to an actual battle between Primarchs, with Dorn left grievously injured in its aftermath.

Those warriors that witnessed the event were sworn to silence, and the Night Haunter was placed under guard pending sentence by his brothers. Yet there would be no secret trial nor penitent crusade for the Night Haunter, instead the Primarch of the Night Lords broke free of his confinement and left only bloodied corpses in his wake. Blood was spilled between the Legions, a crack opened in what many had previously seen as a brotherhood to stand the test of time. Curze made haste to Nostramo, there to immolate his adopted home world, as much a symbol of his defiance to his brothers as an act intended to return his domain to some semblance of order, and then disappear into the hinterlands of the Great Crusade.

No news of this quiet rebellion would ever reach the wider Imperium, no writs of condemnation or denouncement would be issued from the courts of Terra or punitive fleets sent in search of the errant Primarch. Elements of the Night Lords present in other Expeditionary fleets faced no censure and the Night Haunter himself kept to the dark places beyond the borders of the map, killing and conquering as he always had. The great and the wise placed a higher value on the unity of the Emperor's crusade across the stars than on the open punishment of a warlord that had erred, perhaps even feared what they might unleash should they force Konrad Curze's hand. Instead they resorted to more subtle punishments, ending the shipments of supplies to the sectors held by the Night Lords and effectively banishing him from the ranks of the Great Crusade's vanguard. By the early years of the new millennium the Court of Terra deemed this punishment complete and issued an order for the Night Haunter's recall, granting him a place of honour in the fleet assembling to meet the sudden betrayal of Horus Lupercal.

This would set the pattern for Konrad Curze's return to his adopted home, with even those worlds that had remained largely true to his draconian laws suffering a blight of gruesome punishments to ensure their loyalty. While the other Traitor Legions busied themselves with the initial assaults on the warp channels leading to distant Terra, and Paramar and Karadoc now vast battlefields for the warlords fighting over the Imperium's corpse, the Night Lords set about a private war. For the return of the Night Haunter was far more than the prosecution of the Warmaster's conquest, but also a piece of a vision that the Night Haunter had long dreaded, the next step on a path that had begun when Horus raised his banner at Isstvan. In the descent of Nostramo and its neighbours into madness and debauchery, and the setting of brother against brother, he saw the beginnings of his own demise and the eternal damnation of his Legion. It was a fate he still fought to deny, though his methods were ever more led by desperation before cunning, and he loosed the warriors of his Legion to eradicate all signs of that possibility, to wipe clean the stain of perfidy with blood and perhaps turn the course of fate itself.

The Price of Infamy

Had perhaps his tools been more finely forged, his own will more honed and less brittle than such desperate measures might have succeeded, but the Night Lords were no longer that which they had once been. The decay of the Nostramo sector had run far deeper and for far longer than many had guessed, its tendrils spread not only among the worlds that were pledged to the Night Lords, but into the very Legion itself. Long had it been the custom of the Night Lords to take their recruits from but a small swathe of worlds, mostly those being in close proximity to Nostramo, and as those worlds had turned rotten so too had

NIGHT LORDS REAVER LEGIONARY

LEGIONARY YERLAC GNAR

THRAMAS CRUSADE

44TH REAVER BATTALION, 43RD CHAPTER

Legionary Gnar was attached to the forces that ravaged the Thramas sector in the early stages of the Thramas Crusade, one among the thousands given orders to reap a toll of blood and carnage upon those worlds that had fallen into the possession of the VIIIth Legion. This was no careful campaign of fear, enacted to force those stubborn Loyalist strongholds that remained to bow the knee before the Night Haunter, but one whose sole aim was slaughter and the building of petty kingdoms among the ruins of the failing Imperium. Marked by the Cross of Bone, as seen on Gnar's left vambrace, these reaver battalions followed the lead of Night Lords warlords such as Nakrid Thole and Cel Herec in taking what they deemed their deserved share of the Imperium's wealth and eschewed the aims and wishes of Primarch and Warmaster.

These powerful warlords, whose influence had grown within the Legion as the Night Haunter's madness had swelled, gathered to themselves the pick of those resources available to the Night Lords. A prime example is the advanced MkVI battle plate worn by Legionary Gnar, of which the Legiones Astartes had received but a few scattered shipments before the Horus Heresy had put an end to the supply lines that had once served them. Of all the Legions, the Night Lords had received relatively few such shipments, and armour of this mark was largely limited to the 9th, 14th, 27th, and 43rd Chapters – all of which bore the mark of the Cross of Bone.



The standard Legion emblem in use by the Night Lords at the beginning of the Thramas Crusade.



Molecular bonding studs were a common armouring technique used to strengthen Space Marine battle plate in the face of the ever more deadly battlefields which were endured by the warriors of the Legiones Astartes.

the youths sent to meet the Legion's tithe. Though they made able killers, they had not the discipline and commitment to the cause of the Great Crusade that had marked the early Legions, with many companies now filled entirely with such warriors, often to the chagrin of veteran Terran companies. These would be the tools by which Konrad Curze attempted to cut away the infection that had gripped his small empire.

These new Night Lords had been forged in the corrupt regimes that had gripped Nostramo and its neighbours, much different from the grim hardship that had moulded the Night Haunter and the gangs of Old Nostramo. These warriors paid little heed to the codes that had guided those brutal fighters, given instead to the wanton application of bloody violence – the supremacy of the strong over the weak in all things. Where once the Night Haunter had taught his people that all actions must have their consequences, that blood must be repaid in blood, that creed had been corrupted so that those with the strength to seize power could do as they pleased. This was true of the rich and poor alike, with some showing their strength in the riches by which they bought and sold those beneath them and others by the skill with which they

plied their blades. It would be the lowest dregs of this society that went to fill the ranks of the Night Lords, those for whom strength and power were measured in the fear of those around them.

Loosed by their master, the nature of the Night Lords was made clear by their actions, for given leave by the Night Haunter to hunt as they willed, they took to the worlds of the Nostramo sector not as a disciplined whole, but as a throng of scattered warbands and raiding hosts. They bore little resemblance to the ordered ranks of the old VIIIth Legion, nor even to the savage but focused bands of the Raven Guard or White Scars who fought in their own style, but rather as a gleeful mob of killers. They did not lack in skill at arms, and where they met resistance it crumbled before their prowess with blade and gun, but in restraint they were sorely wanting. Few worlds escaped the scourge of their brutal proclivities, with the greater part of them more concerned with the red spectacle of their raids than the order they were intended to enforce. Fear was the weapon they had been schooled in by their master, and it was one they wielded with abandon, one they plied until it cloaked the worlds about the corpse of Nostramo like a shroud. Yet, such was the terror they engendered that though none that felt their lash dared to transgress the laws of Curze, few remained able to fulfil the new tithes Horus demanded of him.

Those of the Night Lords that remembered the old ways fought on with the skill and pragmatic valour that had carried them through the Great Crusade, but found their efforts to re-establish the fiefdom that they had once ruled stymied by the Legion's more zealous recruits. Both those of Terran birth and the elder Nostraman recruits found themselves further and further from the counsel of the Night Haunter, whose visions spurred him to greater efforts of bloody retribution and gave the more vicious of his new sons greater influence over him. That the efforts of the veterans, measured but still bloody, brought the Legion more reward than the frenzied bloodletting of their juniors seemed unimportant to the Primarch, whose dreams grew darker as Horus' rebellion itself gained in power and worlds all across the Imperium plunged into war and darkness. He began to listen less and less to the old veterans of the Great Crusade, those warriors whose efforts had so far failed to avert the disaster he foresaw, and instead began to heed the counsel of his newer officers. Both groups saw in the other a threat to that which to them made the Legion strong and, as the fleet marshalled for the assault on the Thramas sector, they set plans for a different campaign.

A Cross of Bone, A Hand of Blood

Though seen by history as the battlefield that would pit the Night Lords against the Dark Angels, Thramas would also be the field upon which another battle would be fought, a battle for the soul of Konrad Curze himself. Lost among the grand battles and terrible slaughters that formed the backdrop of the assault on the Thramas Sector, the Night Lords underwent their own quiet rebellion. The two faces of the Legion fought a sullen fratricidal struggle for control of their Legion and its Primarch. There were those that yearned for the glory days when the Night Lords stood among the legends of the Imperium, a military force to be reckoned with, and those who sought only the bloody mandate to pillage and kill in the wild stars at the edge of Imperium space. Horus had offered them freedom in his rebellion and therein lay the heart of their tragedy, for in freedom they had found only despair, both in the decline of their Primarch and in the decline of their Legion.

Those among the Night Lords that sought to fully grasp this new freedom Horus offered them were mostly those recruits taken in from the corrupted worlds about Nostramo, though they presented the least unified front. A collection of disparate warlords and warbands, they were united by a desire to kill and reave as they chose, without regard for the Great Crusade or the desires of distant generals. They sought to return to their origins, to re-imagine the Legion in the form of Nostramo's ancient syndicates and street gangs, but with the power to control worlds instead of hive-blocks. They took the symbol of a cross of bone, its form varying between individual warbands, a mark derived from the traditions of worlds across that dark sector that had long stood for a conflict whose end could only be found in death. It was a signal of both their intent and their goal, to those who opposed them it promised a grisly end and to the Legion at large it offered a path that would allow them to fully exploit the gifts they had been given.

They sought to carve out a kingdom of their own in Horus' new dominion, a realm where they could rule as befit the warriors of the Night Lords and cared little for the often obscure goals of the Night Haunter. Nakrid Thole stood as a prominent member of this faction, recruited from the hive cities of Nostramo in its final years and schooled in war by the gang strife of his youth and the brutal purges of the Great Crusade's later campaigns. To him and those like him, Curze was a distant figure, one enamoured of strange oracles and premonitions who kept them on a short leash. Were he to be kept away from the battlefield, left to obsess over his dreams and regrets then the warriors of the Night Lords could slip the leash and run wild across the stars. Thole and his allies saw a galaxy ripe for the plucking, one where those joined to the cause of Horus could take what had been denied them in the Great Crusade. No longer would it be the Ultramarines and Imperial Fists, the favourites of the Emperor, who would reap the rewards of the long war for the galaxy, but those who had once been forced to skulk in the shadows of the Emperor's great plan.

In opposition to them were the veterans of the old VIIIth Legion, both Terran and Nostraman, as well as those newer recruits who saw in their Primarch something more than an omen-watcher and madman. They were still pledged to the rebellion Horus had begun, determined to see the overthrow of the Emperor, but they retained the spark of honour that had once been at the heart of both the Legion and the ancient gangs of Nostramo. A harsh and unforgiving code that guided their actions, they killed in a manner that the other Legions found brutal and distasteful, but it served a purpose, it was not random slaughter but a necessary duty. In the Primarch these warriors saw the pinnacle of this tradition, a warrior willing to sacrifice the appearance of honour for the fulfilment of duty, the one who had carved the code they followed into the very soul of those that lived among the worlds of the Nostramo sector. They sought to stand amongst the other Legions with pride, no longer the Emperor's butchers or hidden knives, but at the forefront of a new regime for all to see. They needed a strong Primarch, one that could guide the Legion and see them to their rightful position in Horus' new empire.

Foremost among these veterans stood the warrior Sevatar, though he himself disdained such politics, he served as the icon of those that fought to empower their Primarch. In honour of his devotion to Curze the symbol of the red gauntlet which he bore, a death-mark in the old Nostraman code, became the symbol of those pledged to the Primarch's side. It was an irony not lost on the Nostraman warriors of both factions that it was a mark of dishonour that stood for what some might interpret as the Loyalist faction within the Legion. Sevatar himself worked tirelessly throughout the campaigns in both Nostramo and Thramas to support the goals of his Primarch in war and to strengthen the resolve of the Night Haunter himself. He would commit more than his share of slaughters, but each for a purpose other than his own bloodlust, each for the glory of his Legion and the needs of his Primarch. Yet, Sevatar cared not for the machinations of others within the Legion, and fought his own battles without heed for those who would be his allies. Others acted as leaders for the faction. Anrek Barbatos of the Primarch's guard was one, for his dedication to the Night Haunter was legend within the Legion, and others too among the captains and praetors, these warriors would coordinate the secret war fought between the Night Lords.

This hidden war was not to be fought directly. There would be no pitting Night Lord against Night Lord in open battle, no grand confrontation that would settle the issue. Instead it was fought with sharp knives and bitter words, warriors brought low in honour duels and battlefield incidents or disgraced in council and isolated from the Primarch. Even as they fought to control the worlds of the Tithe Road at the outskirts of the Thramas system they fought with each other, with commanders struck down over the right to lead invasions and others castigated for their failures in battle and exiled from the Primarch's side. As they pushed further into the Thramas sector the battles would only intensify, both on and off the battlefield, with Thole able to further leverage the death-tolls of both his own and his subordinates to claim ever more influence over the Primarch. Brash words and bloody triumphs served to grant those that fought under the Cross of Bone the influence they required to drown out their opponents, whose champions could do little to stem the tide of fervour that took hold of the rank and file of the Night Lords. It seemed that what little remained of the VIIIth Legion that had left Terra nearly two centuries before had been all but completely suppressed.

A Decline Long Foreseen

Even as his Legion fought for his attention, struggled to save or to damn him, Konrad Curze turned his face from his sons and lapsed into a fugue that only exacerbated the conflict. Long had he battled against the dire future he had foreseen with that cursed fragment of his father's gift that had passed to him. In his youth he had imposed order with the blood of the wicked, under the guidance of the Emperor and his brothers. He had tried to tame his gift and see past the terrors it showed him, and as he fought for Horus he tried to drown the visions in death. None had worked, whatever methods the Night Haunter employed, his nightmares remained unchanged and inescapable. Its first signs had already come to pass: corruption had taken root in his cities despite all the blood shed to chain them in fear, and as he had once tried to warn his brothers, the Imperium had fallen into civil war. To the narrow glimpse of the future that the Night Haunter could perceive, what was to follow seemed inevitable, 10,000 years of blood and death that would continue long after his own doom.

With the failure of his attempts in Nostramo and the initial stages of the Thramas Campaign to counter the fate he foresaw, Konrad Curze withdrew from the fighting and secluded himself in the half-finished fortress on Tsagualsa. There he would spend much of the war imprisoned in a cage of his own despair, giving vent to his frustration in a series of ever more deranged and violent displays, enough even to disquiet the Night Lords. The Primarch wallowed for a time in despondency, raged at the futility of his struggle and etched his pain onto the hides of those unfortunate prisoners dragged to his lair. In his absence, Thole and his disciples threw the Night Lords into combat across the sector, the count of dead foes deemed of more import than the strategic worth of their gains. For as the Primarch shied further away from his duties as overlord of the Night Lords, the more power he ceded to Nakrid Thole and those like him. Sevatar and those others of the Primarch's inner circle were tied to his side, unable to take to the vanguard of the war while he languished in his fugue, waiting for new orders and pleading for the Night Haunter to abandon his doldrums and take once again to battle.

Their efforts to stir the Primarch would bear bitter fruit, raising him to action for the brief confrontation with the Lion on Tsagualsa. No living creature now knows what Curze hoped to gain from that battle, for in single combat there were few among the Primarchs that could match Lion El'Jonson blade to blade. Perhaps

he had hoped that in sharing his visions he might find answers, perhaps he sought to warn his brother of the horrors yet to come, perhaps he even hoped that the Lion would kill him, that he might escape the fate that haunted him in that simple fashion. Whatever the intentions of the Night Haunter, he would leave the battlefield bloodied and no more sane than when he had gone forth. It was a pattern that would be repeated at Sheol, where once again Konrad Curze would throw himself at his brother and force the most loyal of his sons to sacrifice themselves so that his broken but still-breathing form could be recovered. Even as little more than a comatose and insensate burden, the Primarch remained at the centre of his Legion's struggle. Those that had fought to free the Legion blamed him for their dire situation, while those that sought to return both the Legion and Primarch to glory struggled to preserve him in the face of his failure.

The Butcher's Bill

Despite the apparent failure of the Night Haunter's plans, it would be his actions that finally tipped the balance of power within the Legion to those of his sons that sought to free him from his visions. For in giving the more headstrong portions of his Legion their freedom he had allowed them to overextend their forces and commit themselves to a series of battles that were now beyond their means to finish – they were caught in the trap of their own hubris. In the final months of the Thramas Campaign, many of those that bore the Cross of Bone were cut down, Nakrid Thole falling at Thramas, Vaeduc the Maimed at Sheol and Malithos and Cel Herec at the hands of Sevatar and his Atramentar. With their deaths, the more loyal sons of Curze finally took control of the Legion, with Sevatar assembling a new inner council, the Kyroptera of the Night Lords, filled with warriors he counted as loyal to his cause and the Legion's survival. This new council would lead while the Primarch languished at the edge of death, setting a more pragmatic course than those that had taken the reins for the majority of the Thramas Campaign.

True to its desire to return the Legion to its former glory, the new Kyroptera commanded its warriors to take the shattered remains of the Legion to Horus' side, that they might fight in the manner of true warriors and cease skulking in the shadows of the grand rebellion that had overtaken the Imperium. Thramas and the strange madness it had inflicted upon the Primarch were abandoned, his attempts to thwart fate set aside as he lay wounded, and the ragged remnants of the Night Lords

fleet assembled to depart the Eastern Fringe and return to the heart of the war in the Segmentum Solar. The Night Lords would be free of the Nostramo sector, the burden of guilt for their home world's destruction and the enforcement of the Night Haunter's failed regime. They would fight once more as a true Legion, wild conquerors and not bored wardens, and the fury of open battle would cleanse them of the taint that had taken hold of the Legion. This was Sevatar's final plan and the resolve of those that had aligned themselves with him, to free both Legion and Primarch from the slow degeneration that plagued them.

Yet it was not to be. Even as the surviving ships of the Night Lords gathered, their commanders convinced by the power of Sevatar's arguments or by the blades of his allies to join their warriors to this new plan, the two nemeses that had plagued them since their arrival in Thramas intervened once more. The Dark Angels were the first, an incarnation of the Emperor's wrath given terrible form and power that could not be matched in open battle. The black ships of their fleet poured forth from the Warp, the blasts of their weapons a penance for the hubris of the Night Lords and the sins they had committed, cutting a path through the remnants of the Night Haunter's fleet. This alone could not have ended the Night Lords' hopes of salvation, the Lion and his sons could wound them, wound them gravely, but not kill them before they could escape and begin the path back to glory. It would be the second nemesis, by far the most deadly of the two, that would seal their fate, a threat that they could never truly be free of. Even as the ships of the Night Lords fleet closed on the pre-set warp translation point that would take them to Horus' side, the Night Haunter stirred from his torpor.

Unable to ignore the orders of their gene-father and unwilling to abandon him to the mercies of the Loyalists, many among the Legion joined a last suicidal assault into the teeth of the Dark Angels. Perhaps a last attempt by the Night Haunter to find death at the hands of his brother and avoid the dire fate he foresaw, or nothing more than a last spiteful dart thrown at his enemies, the attack had no chance of stopping or delaying the Dark Angels. Instead, it sundered what little of the Night Lords that had survived. Those that managed to fight free of the battle disappeared into the Warp almost at random, scattered across the galaxy and unable to reform the Legion as it once was, while those who turned back to fight at the bidding of their cursed master were all but annihilated.

All of the death that had been wrought to restore the Night Lords, all of the hardships that had been endured by its warriors, had been in vain, thwarted by the actions of the Night Haunter. They had become a poison spread across the Imperium, sowing chaos and death wherever the scattered warbands had been deposited. It was the next stage of

Konrad Curze's nightmares given form at last, but one step away from the oblivion of eternal damnation that awaited them, but one step away from the Night Haunter's death at the order of his father in a future he had hoped never to see. The last bitter sting of the lash, the last howl of despair that haunted Konrad Curze as he went into exile trapped aboard the

Dark Angels flagship was the knowledge that it was he himself that had brought the curse to fruition. Here would be the end of Konrad Curze, the last remnants of the Emperor's troubled son subsumed by the darkness that had come to control him. All that would remain was the Night Haunter and death.



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