

It should be his day, Ortwin thought while going down the silent corridor. Still. He couldn't bring himself to even the slightest smile.

He didn't like Varek, that was no secret. Some even said he hated him, although that was not true. The truth was that, of course, he hated to lose the position of Legion Master to him. Nonetheless, Varek was one of his brothers, and even before Canaan had rejoined with the Legion, he was very capable at leading. They also were quite different types of people. Where Ortwin used brutal force, Varek talked. Where Ortwin punished harshly, Varek showed mercy.

If he hated someone from the Legion, it was surely Canaan, their so called "Primarch". What a joke, to call her that, he thought so often, that he questioned his own loyalty sometimes. Other Legions had strong fighters, like the Warmaster himself, or tactical geniuses like Horatio Sulla. Or even better, Ayden Baha, with her "to the point"-hierarchy. These were godlike beings worthy of calling themselves a Primarch. But Canaan was not. How could a Primarch send diplomats to xenos and talk to Eldar instead of killing them on sight?

"Is this treason?", he thought again to himself. Ortwin would never dare to act against her, although many people might believe that. He shook his head. "This is not the right time to think about such things", Ortwin whispered to himself.

He was right. Only mere hours before Legion Master Varek fell in battle. The whole Legion was shocked. Ultimately, the battle was won, but no one was cheering. No "after-battle-party", no speech from Canaan, just silence in the whole fortress. Ortwin could not help but recognize that even he missed the lively hours after a victory. He might seem uptight all the time, but he knew, that warriors, even if they were the like of Astartes, need some relief after a battle. You always could mourn the dead in the next days. Except this time they couldn't. One of their greatest leader and oldest battle-brothers was gone. Canaan hadn't come out of her chamber since she got back. Ortwin had heard that she was so angry about Varek's death that she started to throw tanks around and tear apart enemy soldiers with her bare hands. According to these stories, it was the first time she showed no mercy to anyone crossing her line of sight, until she single-handedly wiped out the enemy commanders.

The bearded Marine didn't know if these tales were true, but he surely wouldn't ask her that. To be honest to himself, Ortwin didn't even want to come in the first place. But if your Primarch sends for you, after all that what had happened, you won't refuse. Most likely she will give me back the title of Legion Master, he thought. It was common that the new one was officially promoted only a few hours after the old one died in battle, so that the chain of command was clear and nobody could use this as a weakness against them. Or so it was during the time of the Imperial Golems.

As Ortwin came close to Canaan's chambers, he saw that her door was open a little and a white haired, bearded old man came out. It was easy to recognize him as the Space Marine

who bore the moniker "Grandfather". He was the oldest Marine in the Legion and most likely the oldest Marine across all Legions. Grandfather Benjamin fought alongside the Emperor himself on Terra and knew more stories than Ortwin could imagine. He never sought a leadership position, and was instead happy to train the new recruits of the Legion. The nickname Grandfather hadn't come out of nowhere.

Ortwin bowed his head to show his respect for the elder man.

"Ah, you are here youngling," Grandfather said. For a normal person this word would sound strange, as Ortwin was only second in age compared to the rest of the Hammers.

"She sent for me."

"I know, I know", he said with a deep and caring voice. "Canaan knows you, even if you might not believe that"

"I don't think her feelings for me has anything to do with this", Ortwin answered, much harder than he intended. "I am sorry, I didn't want to sound rude."

"No offense taken," he said with a sad smile. "But you might want to brace yourself before entering."

"What do you mean?"

"She....well, I guess you have to see for yourself. But keep in mind that the death of Varek hurts her more than it hurts the Legion."

The sad and knowing eyes of Grandfather Benjamin looked into Ortwin's. After a few moments the older Marine let his head sink and started to walk in the direction of Ortwin's arrival.

"If you will excuse me, I have the burden of bringing the tale of Varek's death into the archives."

Ortwin waited a few second, watching the white haired Marine on his way, before turning around towards the Primarch's chamber.

Carefully, Ortwin opened the door, after knocking. He heard a quiet "Come in", so he entered the room. Even with his enhanced senses, he couldn't see much of the once so cheerful room. The curtains were closed, and a single candle burned on a desk. He could recognize a being, most likely Canaan, sitting in a huge armchair, its back towards him.

A weak and depressed voice came from the dark sitting shape and if Ortwin hadn't know her for such a long time, he wouldn't have recognized Canaan's voice.

"I know how important the old traditions are for you, Ortwin. Therefore I grant you the title of Legion Master. You have more than earned it and already proved you are worthy time and time again. Hell, if it wasn't for me, you would still hold the title today and you would have done a great job, I am sure of it. I gave you the hardest and most ungrateful command in the whole Legion and you excelled my expectations by far. I knew you were the best man for it, but I didn't know how good you were."

Ortwin was startled. He always thought he had done something wrong in her eyes, and because of that he was demoted, that he was not worthy of commanding, too different compared to her. But now he know what Grandfather Benjamin meant. He had the command of the 3rd because she thought so much of him, because she cared enough about him to know he was the one capable to command this company.

"I...Thank you, my Primarch! I will do my best to honour you and fill the hole Brother Varek left."

“NO!”

The sudden outburst of sound made Ortwin wince, and he bowed his head in reflex.

“No...”, she added weakly, changing her position so a little more light shone on her and the former Legion Master’s characteristic helmet visible on her lap.

Ortwin didn’t dare to look up at her. “I...I...”, he stumbled. For the first time, the Marine didn’t have a clue how to react.

“Ortwin. I know you hate me for putting you in command of the 3rd, and installed Varek as Legion Master. You *know* that I am not the warrior, or the tactician like most of my siblings are. I am not the one who wages war as skillfully as them. But you are. I never wanted a weapon of war, so I tried to change the Hammers into a weapon of peace. It was clear that I couldn’t bring peace to the 3rd company, so it was only logical that I installed my most skilled commander as their leader. No one else could have achieved what you achieved. Even the warmaster sent his respects for how the 3rd turned out. From every person in this Legion, not even I can rival you in terms of war. And it seems the times are changing. For every war I prevent, two new ones start. It is time for me to accept that we need to wage war to get the peace I want. It’s time to turn the Legion into the warmachine it should be.”

After a moment of silence, Ortwin brought himself to speak. “This is not true, and you know that, my Primarch. Every Legion I talked to, even many of the Primarchs, are in awe of you for how easy it seems for you to bring worlds peacefully into compliance. I won’t lie to you. Not everyone, not even in this Legion agrees with you. I am the best example of it. But none of them can deny what you achieved.” He took a deep breath and gathered all the braveness he could find. “I am loyal to you until I die and as Legion Master I have to inform you about everyone who isn’t. The only person currently disloyal to you is yourself. If you don’t stop that I have to inform the Custodes about that.”

It was a bold move to appeal to her humour, but he hoped she had not already changed, and that her bright side was still somewhere inside of her.

For a few seconds, nothing happened, and he already picturing how she would attack him for his temerity. But then he heard a weak chuckle coming from Canaan.

“I already regret making you my second in command” she whispered jokingly.

“But you can’t take that back anymore, my Primarch”, Ortwin allowed himself a little smile.

“True. But if you start to call me “my Primarch” from now on, I can throw you out of a window.” The Space Marine wasn’t sure if that was a joke or not.

“Please Ortwin, call me Canaan. That way it’s easier for you to keep your hard image.”

“Agreed. If you excuse me now, Canaan.”

Ortwin turned away from Canaan and went towards the door. Just as he wanted to open it, the Primarch spoke again.

“As my Number 1, you should know something.”

He faced her, silently waiting for the reveal.

“Varek was like a son to me. He was so close and similar to me, that he really could have been my son. But I can’t have children. I know that most of my siblings don’t really care, but for me it always leaves a strange feeling that thousands of Astartes call me mother. Only Varek and Grandpa knew that. And only Grandpa knew about my feelings towards Varek.” She paused.

“I...He really was like a son to me.”

Ortwin looked at her and thought he saw a tear glittering on its way down her cheek.

“I will inform everyone that, whatever they want can either wait or be brought to me. You mourn like he deserve. Like you deserve.”