

Chapter 358: Magnus's Radiant Future

[Nikaea Theatre, Thousand Sons Lounge]

This was wrong.

This was unjust.

Why did his most beloved father keep a monster by his side? Why did he trust the lies of witch-hunters?

Magnus felt betrayed—mocked. The seat of honor on the grand stage had been given to a devil, and the ending had been decided before the curtain even rose.

Why... why would the Emperor do this?

The Crimson King agonized over the question. He felt betrayal, deception, and bewilderment. The father who had once shared all knowledge with him now greeted him with a cold, closed face.

Had he truly done something wrong? Magnus struggled to understand. The only thing he had ever done was pursue the truth of humanity. He was willing to sacrifice anything—willing to be humanity's Prometheus, stealing fire to lead the cave-bound masses into the light.

If he had erred, then his only mistake was that his hunger for knowledge was too strong, too pure—drawing the jealousy of the ignorant. They did not understand what Magnus was doing. They only knew how to destroy and distort his life's work.

How was he supposed to explain bacteria to primitives? Tell them humans are made of tiny living organisms? How was he supposed to demonstrate electromagnetism to tribesmen who would only scream that it was unclean sorcery?

If Magnus was wrong, then it was because he was too kind. He insisted on teaching the ignorant rather than erasing them. And among those ignorant, he had unwittingly nurtured the very brutes who now pushed him toward the pyre.

Why—why must people shove and howl at each other, delivering judgment before any fair contest can even begin? Knowledge and progress grow from affection and equality. Why has humanity still not grasped such a simple truth?

Strange, shifting light flickered in Magnus's eyes. The aether soothed him gently—its beloved son. Magnus took a deep breath.

If only humanity could love one another as the Warp did!

Within the aether, not a single emotion could be hidden. Knowledge and souls were open and honest. The greatest mysteries and discoveries lay within—it was humanity's evolutionary treasure. It should not be burned by the brutal and ignorant!

Magnus inhaled deeply again. He buried his face in his broad hands—hands that had flipped through countless tomes—

And in the next moment, he saw the future.

A radiant future.

And he would be the one to ignite himself, the sacrificial flame shielding humanity as it stepped into that radiance.

. . .

“F?# ! I×?”

Cold—piercing, bone-deep cold scorched Magnus. He knew it well: overuse of psychic power brought frost.

Magnus trembled. Violent remorse and resolve swallowed him whole.

He lifted his head and saw the storm-torn curtain thrashing wildly. A shockwave rose—enough to erase galaxies.

No—NO!

Magnus didn’t know why he was crying. He was only a bystander, yanked without warning into the future. But he was filled with fury and unwillingness, alongside a colossal determination to sacrifice.

The Crimson King spread his arms wide in the frigid wind. Frost struck him, psychic lightning leapt skyward. He cried ancient incantations at the top of his voice.

The entire planet cried with him—resonated with him! The aether was filled with souls of kindness, souls who were also willing to sacrifice. He felt their heart-rending sorrow as they marched toward their destined end.

Magnus was alone. No one understood him. But the Warp’s goodwill bound tightly to him, and he felt himself being torn apart.

He accepted it willingly.

The Crimson King stared at the force that would destroy everything. He raised both arms high. The storm howled around him; his soul burned—

He would stop this.

He *had* to.

Through the driving snow far below, he saw a figure sprinting toward him—

“Magnus?! What the FUCK are you doing?! Get down here RIGHT NOW!!!”

Magnus let out a trembling, bitter laugh. He no longer expected his brother to understand. He had to save humanity and his father’s fate. He now understood: he was the chosen sacrifice.

The icy wind swallowed the enraged shout, ripping it into unbelieving, wounded sobs. Magnus fixed his gaze on that force of destiny and chanted the final spell—

Darkness swallowed everything.

He opened his eyes as if resurfacing from drowning. Magnus realized he was kneeling on the ground, gasping for breath. Ahriman was beside him, full of worry, and farther away, that *demon* appeared abruptly—circling like a vulture hoping to gnaw on his corpse.

The Crimson King trembled as he smiled.

His fate would not end here. He would lead humanity into a radiant future. Everything happening now was nothing but a farce performed by fools. His true purpose would not be halted by this.

He waved his hand, rejecting Ahriman's attempt to help him up. Magnus staggered to his feet, yet his expression was relaxed.

Fearlessly, he stared through the wall at the monster brazenly scrutinizing him. Magnus would prove he was right. He *would* triumph. The Warp had already shown him that magnificent destiny—he would, in the final moment, offer himself up, becoming a true sage of wisdom.

He would save the Imperium and humanity. Magnus believed this with absolute certainty.

He spoke, his voice hoarse:

“The council may continue. I will prevail.”

. . .

【Nikaea Theatre, Upper Chamber】

Vorx furrowed his brow imperceptibly. A message came through his channel: a massive psychic surge had erupted in the Thousand Sons' lounge—but fortunately, Hades had gone to investigate immediately.

The Wolf King, along with Fulgrim and Valdor—who had been waiting here in the upper chamber for Hawser's data report—left in haste. The Sister of Silences stationed here had been pulled away as well. Vorx heard the chimes signaling that the council had resumed.

Most people here were gone now, yet Vorx still didn't know what exactly had happened.

But with Hades present—Imperium's strongest Blank—the Thousand Sons *should* be safe... probably.

Vorx thought uneasily, glancing at the scene before him. The two Tech-Priests, Jin and Korklan—who had been checking the instruments just moments ago—were now... uh... engaging in mild mutual assault. Hawser sat on the examination bed, staring wide-eyed at their private little war. Bjorn of the Space Wolves stood with arms crossed, thoroughly enjoying the show.

Slowly, Vorx began to realize he was probably the only person here capable of restoring order. He looked desperately toward Amon of the Legio Custodes, stationed as their guard, but the Custodian merely stood there, unmoving.

Which meant Vorx was the last sane person in the room. He felt despair creep up on him and adjusted the heavy ammunition at his waist. He still carried Mortarion's mission.

Should he say something like "Stop fighting"?

"You little brat, you leak more engine oil than you piss! How did *you* end up as an Archmagos? YOU EVEN EDITED THE LITANY I WROTE?!"

"XD. Sounds like someone didn't work hard enough and spent all his time figuring out what fabric the saint's robes were made of and got abandoned

by my Lord. Anyway, the Lord of the Underworld chose *me* in the end. By the way, the armor he's wearing now is also Jin-306 manufacture!"

"Oh? Archmagos Korklan, are you angry? No way, no way~ My apologies, I forgot you prefer being called just 'Korklan' now. And do call me *Archmagos Jin*, Korklan. :D"

Vorx stared as Korklan charged with flailing mehadendrites, crashing straight into Jin's massive mechanical frame. Jin slowly engulfed him like some giant metal insect, his display panel showing a bright, cheerful smile.

XD

Vorx didn't deal often with the Mechanicum—were all Tech-Priests this... energetic?

Bjorn howled, "Glorious!"

Vorx thought bitterly that Garro should be here instead of him. He was already regretting everything.

The two Tech-Priests' brawl grew so intense that Hawser wobbled off the examination bed in terror. Vorx rushed forward—partly to protect Hawser, partly to prevent him from suddenly doing something foolish.

One small comfort: Bjorn, despite enjoying the show, subtly stepped closer to Hawser as well.

Behind them, the long-silent Custodian Amon suddenly stepped forward. Vorx exhaled in relief. *Finally*, someone would stop the two Magos' absurd duel.

