

This excerpt from a sample heavy express edit, by John Robin, shows moderate level issues that would require more rigor than an express edit could cover, but still well within the range of heavy express. The deciding factor for this task was the requirement of developmental work due to no previous editing, allowing John to push for developmental suggestions where required, but note that, for the economy of a one-revision pass, all suggestions are aimed to supply a final form (whereas in a developmental pass, comments can point toward rewrites without supplying a specific suggestion for final form).

Inquisitor? ~~no, he reminded himself.~~ “No. There’s no point. I’m just Germanus now. After what I’ve done, that life is behind me now.”

“It is a rather important decision. Are you sure you made the right one?”

“They didn’t give me a choice!” ~~The Inquisitor~~Germanus retorted harshly, before his voice returned to a neutral tone. “I didn’t make a rash choice. This was bound to happen.”

“True, true. Frankly, I am surprised it took this long, all things considered. The state of things, being what they are and the world being what it is.”

“Isn’t all of this your doing?” Germanus asked, raising his deep brown ~~coloured~~ eyes to regard the hooded figure.

“Yes, but there’s no need to point fingers. I have my task and you have yours. And I thank you for your cordiality, given that we work on opposite sides in this struggle.”

“That’s an odd word to use for this epidemic.”

The other smiled, the whites of his teeth gleam~~ing~~ed in the fire light. “It’s about perspective, young man. You’re new to this contest, whereas I have been here since the very first. You could say it was I that threw down the gauntlet; and the Enemy that ~~hesitated~~ to pick it up.”

~~The Inquisitor~~Germanus snorted. “I think you give yourself too much credit. All this patting yourself on the back must put your shoulder out of joint.”

“Who are you to lecture me, Germanus?” The hooded man half stood from his seat. “Does not your order teach respect for your elders?”

“You’re one to talk, rebelling against the Maker.”

“Fool!” the man said with heat, bringing his fist down on the table. “High and mighty, you think you are better than I?”

“I am no better than any man, and since you are not really a man then perhaps it is your own inferiority that drives you?” ~~the Inquisitor~~Germanus said with heat.

The war dog turned from its meal to regard its master and whined plaintively.

“Even your hound disagrees with you!”

“Unlikely, since this is a one-sided argument. You are not wanted here, shade. Some of us have the good sense to know when and whom to annoy. I neither like you nor agree with you.”

“And yet you were expecting me and left the door open.”

~~Inquisitor~~ Germanus rose and walked to the door. He stared out, not looking at anything in particular, and then shut out the rain and wind.

Returning to his pack, ~~the Inquisitor~~Germanus crumbled some dry leaves into a cup and then poured in hot water. He stared indifferently at the table with its one chair, before he sat down—alone. He sipped at his tea, savouring the spreading warmth it provided. Germanus went back to work on the shovel. Images swirled in his mind, a girl’s twirling dress, sparklers in her small hand; the high sound of her voice singing with abandon. He blinked away the images, focusing on the task at hand—sliding the whetstone in strong, purposeful strokes. This shovel would need to work hard and quickly. When he was satisfied, he put the shovel aside and lit a torch.

It was time to prepare.

~~The Inquisitor~~Germanus took his time, first by sweeping the floor and making a painstaking inspection to be sure there would be no obstructions. That done, he walked over to the tied bundle, lifted it with reverence,

Comment [A1]: I’d cut this to avoid confusion. It’s enough to show him questioning the title, then in his dialogue that fills in the missing gaps with subtext.

Comment [A2]: This is just a consideration, but your reader may wonder why he’s thinking of himself as “Inquisitor” throughout the story. The assumption made here is that he’s contradicting himself and it just saying this but inwardly still thinks of himself as the Inquisitor. Is that your intention?

Comment [A3]: This switch is jarring – because his internal world should remain consistent and shouldn’t just switch because of this dialogue. I’m opting to switch to “Inquisitor” with occasional slip to Germanus.

That said, if you *do* mean to make it so that Inquisitor is not something he thinks of himself as, then all throughout, where you say “the Inquisitor” it should be Germanus. If he’s truly changed and doesn’t see himself as Inquisitor it will be jarring for the reader to have him refer to himself as such.

and placed it carefully in middle of the floor; before loosening the bindings. He placed torches on makeshift poles, retrieved some chalk from his tools; and opened another book. Kneeling on the floor, he outlined a large circle and then filled the inner space near the circumference with ancient diagrams and cuneiform symbols.

After an hour of intense writing and scrutiny, Germanus leaned back on his haunches. He rolled his shoulder to relieve the soreness. With his left hand he reached over and pulled on his sore right shoulder; pushed pent up breath out his nose and stood.

The Inquisitor Germanus could delay no longer; wherever Dareus was, he was likely still leading the soldiers away. He would have to work without his squire and hope he had strength enough to complete the task.

The Inquisitor finished the dregs of his tea and cleared his throat before he began the incantation. The war dog and horse cringed as Germanus' voice twisted with the inflection of his words. Syllables in Enochean and Latin blurred, dimming flames and bending the light around the Inquisitor.

"Charlotte," he Germanus called quietly, then more chanting. "Charlotte, I, Germanus, call and do summon you to your appointed rest. Heed my voice and follow."

Outside, the wind howled and whipped about, frenzied and alive. The Inquisitor heard voices, and whispers of long silent echoes were heard. He Germanus bore down, concentrated in dread earnest; He could feel the spirits, restless and angry, clawing at the walls of the mill.

"Charlotte, hear me!" Germanus called, drawing a breath and stretching to his full stature.

A girl's voice, childlike and pure. A giggled, the sound of feet shuffling in a dance; and the slight pat of hands clapping to a tune. The bundle twitched and began to unfurl. The Inquisitor Germanus's eyes narrowed, but his voice remained steady.

"Old man, what do you want with us?" a deep voice spoke above the cacophony of the other unintelligible voices, mixing with the young child's voice, casting a dark edge over it.

"Charlotte, it is time to rest," Germanus said.

"The girl is ours!" a coarse, familiar voice replied. "Abandon this endeavour, young man!"

"I hear you, Scarecrow! I will not be swayed!"

The bundle of canvas fell free as the body of young Charlotte stood. Charlotte smoothed out her soiled peasant dress, her once-white, knee-high socks, and scuffed at her church shoes. Her dark hair was pulled back into pig tails under her embroidered bonnet. Her grey splotched skin and dirty fingernails were in stark contrast to her luminescent puss-coloured eyes. The pink discolouration around her eyes and deep, bruise-like stains on her skin gave mute evidence to the sickness that had claimed her life.

Charlotte smiled. "Hello Inquisitor, come to play with me today?" her voice overlaid with others.

"Leave the girl alone!" Inquisitor Germanus commanded.

"Why, are you going to make us?" the voices laughed.

Germanus spoke a single word, and the girl's body jerked and shuddered. "I will if you force me to," he said with dark intent. "Leave her alone."

Charlotte's body shook itself, and she began to giggle and dance. The Inquisitor Germanus watched silently for a moment, his thoughts caught up in a painful memory. His voice raw with emotion, Germanus began his chanting again. At first nothing seemed to happen, and Charlotte continued to dance within the inner circle. Her childlike voice sang a rhyme filled with madness and blasphemy.

"Why do you serve such an absent God? Is he listening to you now? Serve our master and enjoy his rich rewards. Wealth and ease, fame and glory, and those fleshly delights you have always denied yourself."

Germanus began to speak again, making his words deliberate and clear; his voice became more pronounced and stern as he brought his will to bear.

"Naughty, naughty old man, let us play, hear us sing."

"Be gone, filthy things!" he commanded.

"I shall damn thee in thy Lord and God's name,

Throw thee into the abyss from whence I came.

The shadow of thy fear; is the purgatory of Hell.

I shall breathe evil upon this land that thee dwell in.

When the flesh of thy skin shall wither and waste,

Comment [A4]: I made this a fragment to match the structure set up by the first sentence, consistent with the tableau created in this sequence.

Comment [A5]: Is this "Or" i.e. purgatory or Hell?

Comment [A6]: Do you want this spelled this way? Or do you mean Hell?

“Then dust of thy bones shall become mine to taste.”

Charlotte’s body began to twirl; arms outstretched, her voice hard, writhing with filth and impiety. The Inquisitor Germanus’s voice rose in cadence; as he matched the others; he was almost screaming; as he brought the creatures under his will. Charlotte’s body began to writhe and spasm as the Inquisitor’s commands began to erode the spirits’ wills. The voices cut off and Charlotte’s body toppled lifelessly to the ground. The torches sputtered wildly in an unseen wind and then the light steadied. Germanus slid to his hands and knees, his throat raw and rasping with breath. With the back of his hand, he wiped sweat from his brow. He sat back, breathing deep and steady to calm himself.

From outside he heard the sound of shuffling hooves; looking up he saw the goat standing in the open doorway.

“For shame, young man, you should have done better!” the voices from the mouth of the goat commented.

Desperately, Germanus looked down at the circle; it only took a few moments to find it, spots in the chalk where his sweat had degraded the image. *Fool*, he remonstrated to himself.

The sound of snapping bone brought his eyes back up. A shuddering spasm shook the goat’s body erratically as its bones snapped and rearranged themselves. The fur-covered flesh around the face and hooves also changed, seeming to bubble as the face took on a more human aspect and the fore-hooves fell off and clawed fingers sprouted from the open wounds. In mere moments what stood in the door was no longer a goat but a nightmare taken form. The goat was more manlike than beast, legs and arms bent at odd but human angles, the head and face of the goat present but changed to accommodate the voices that spoke.

“Foolish Germanus, we are greater than you and you have freed us!” The laughter that rolled from those torn lips shivered throughout the Inquisitor’s Germanus’ body. His hands shook and his skin puckered with dread. Copious rivulets of noxious, thick fluid ran down the vermin goat’s body.

“Prepare to die, pathetic man!” the voices cried as the beast leapt into the mill and charged with an ungainly lunge at the prone man. Before the goat-thing could strike, the dark blur of muscled war dog that was Dis crashed into the unsuspecting creature, bowling it over. The respite was short lived as the creature gathered its hind legs under itself and kicked the war dog off.

Seemingly in one movement the creature regained its hooves and charged the fallen knight. Germanus was flung through the derelict wall of the mill. As he lay just within the pale torch light, he looked up through blood and tears and saw the vile blasphemous thing stalk over before it kicked him. The blow was hard enough to send the Inquisitor Germanus tumbling down the hill, where he landed in a heap.

He could draw no breath; His lungs burned with the same fire that erupted from his broken ribs. His vision swam and his thoughts scattered. He managed to roll over and begin to backpedal as the goat demon bore down on him. In its left hand, a broken wood beam served as a cudgel. The malignant beast drew back its arm and swung the improvised weapon down.

Germanus closed his eyes.

The sound of wood striking metal made the Inquisitor’s eyes snap open. Young Dareus stood resolute above him, bracing a shield against the creature’s strike.

“Get up, my lord,” Dareus said tersely as he drew his mace. “I’ll cover you.”

Dareus swung at the creature, forcing it back a step, then immediately filled the gap, giving Germanus space to gather himself.

Get up! Germanus commanded himself. He rolled to his knees, causing pain to spasm through his chest.

The Inquisitor whipped mud and blood from his face, and looked around for his weapons. His pistol was nearby and he made a mad dash on hands and knees for it, trying in vain to stifle a cry of pain. Retrieving the weapon, he checked it quickly, then, sure of the powder and shot, drew a bead on the creature and fired.

The shot took the creature in the left shoulder and spun the beast fully about. It almost fell but managed to keep its hooves under it. Dareus did not miss his opportunity. He and swung at the creature’s exposed back and was rewarded with a bone-crunching snap. The demon bleated a demonic howl but did not slow down despite its obvious wounds. It turned to face Dareus once more and swung its cudgel repeatedly. Each blow was blocked by Dareus’ shield and was countered by a swift strike of the mace. The wounds never seemed to faze the demon; it just came back relentlessly. By this time, the Inquisitor Germanus had gained his feet and found his sword.

“The horse!” Dareus shouted, after he noticed Germanus approaching. He ducked and weaved and blocked more attacks, giving little better than he got. ~~The Inquisitor~~ Germanus turned quickly and spotted Dareus’ horse not far off. On it, he saw his ~~helm and~~ Dareus’ spare shield hanging from the saddle bow.

Good boy, Dareus.

Arming himself, Germanus turned back. He saw that Dis had joined Dareus and was savaging the creature’s legs. Germanus waded into the fray, taking up position at Dareus’ right shoulder. Long hours of daily drills quickly brought the master and apprentice into a working harmony, blocking and striking in

Comment [A7]: Unless you mean the helm functioned also as Dareus’ spare shield, this needs to be separated, i.e. with the “and” it indicates these are two separate things hanging from the saddle bow.