

**WARHAMMER**  
**40,000**

**GALL OF  
CHAOS**

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**IN WOLVES'  
CLOTHING**

*by* IAN ST. MARTIN



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Ian St. Martin

Fractured nightmare light undulated across the faceplate of Hrothgir, born of Fenris, as he charged into the throng of screaming fanatics. He snarled at a wall of frenzied cultists, their abused faces swathed in kaleidoscopic silks or flayed of skin, as they broke their twisted bodies against him. Hrothgir's pack kept tight to either side of the Space Wolf, an unbreakable shield wall of storm-grey power armour cleaving through the rusted knives and gnashing teeth.

'Forward brethren!' roared Hrothgir, sweeping cultists apart with crushing blows from his war maul. 'Our time to strike is now!'

The *Vlka Fenryka* had sailed into the Eye like a needle lancing corruption from a boil, hounding a fiend from one of the Traitor Legions and his degenerate rabble across the light of toxic stars. The Wolves of Fenris had run him to ground beneath the skies of this daemon world, goading him into a martial exchange his vanity was incapable of resisting.

Once, Hrothgir's prey had been a warrior of the vaunted III Legion, a peerless swordsman of the Emperor's Children. He had epitomised the martial prowess and ruthless pursuit of perfection that had swept out to reconquer the galaxy during the time the Allfather walked among mortals.

Like all of his Legion, the fires of the Heresy had seared away any nobility and honor from him, and what remained collapsed into decadence and debauched sorcery. For ten millennia he had reaved across the Imperium and the madness of the warp, until he now stood before Hrothgir and his pack upon the mire of this planet within the Eye. Hubris was the enduring trait of the traitor Space Marine, and as the warriors of the rout

cut through the multitude of his wretched devotees to reach him, he could not resist indulging in the bloodshed.

‘You are known by many names,’ Hrothgir boomed, leveling his war maul at the waiting champion of Chaos. ‘Scion of Chemos. Fulgrim’s Champion. Soulthief. Champion of the Fell Powers. But to me, wretched one, you are only prey!’

The traitor smiled and leapt into the fray. He had lost nothing of his martial prowess throughout the millennia. With a silver blade and daemon-possessed lash, the fallen Angel of Death danced into Hrothgir’s pack, a whirling hurricane of feints and precision blows.

Aelfar – known to his packmates as Claw of the East Winds – fell first, bifurcated from collar to hip. The thread of Hama Crow-Song was cut next, run through even as the daemonic lash pinned his arms to his sides. Three more of Hrothgir’s pack would meet their doom in the next frenzied heartbeats.

‘Our prey is a duelist,’ snarled Hrothgir. ‘Let us deny him his comfort!’ His pack howled their assent as they rushed the traitor champion as one.

The battle devolved into a howling brawl as Hrothgir’s pack assailed the scion of the Emperor’s Children. The skies above the daemon world churned, amplified by the bloodshed below and exploding in sunbursts of aurorae and twisted light. Torrents of bile and mercury fell over the battlefield. Mountains thrust into the firmament only to collapse moments later within writhing oceans of unblinking eyes.

The Wolves of Fenris dragged their foe to the ground with their combined strength. Hrothgir leapt up and smashed his maul down into the traitor’s chest. His quarry howled in joyful pain, the contorting faces that covered his blasphemous armour moaning in concert with their gaoler. Hrothgir looked into the eyes of the champion of the fallen Legion as he drew back for the killing strike.

‘So,’ the warrior of the Emperor’s Children grinned, revealing needle-sharp teeth. ‘It shall be you, then.’

With a final swing of his maul, Hrothgir put the name of Lucius the Eternal to the test, and found it wanting.

Hrothgir stood in the silence of the battle’s aftermath as he counted his dead. Their stiffened forms lay on the blighted soil of the daemon world

he stood upon, drifting in the fringes of the Eye between the real and the unreal. The remainder of his pack stood arrayed in loose order behind him, their armour pitted and scorched from the throes of the murdermake.

The fallen Vlka Fenryka were gathered apart from the abattoir that surrounded them. Heaps of broken corpses covered the ground, carved open by blades and ruptured by boltgun fire. Their emptied lifeblood had turned the soil into a sticky, rust-red loam. What was recognisable as having ever been human was covered in blasphemies and entreaties to the fell entities of the warp whose province was pleasure and pain beyond reality's remit.

At Hrothgir's word, Tohern played his flamer over the bodies of their foes, reducing the remains to charred husks rimed with greasy ash. Who they had been, the Space Wolves could not say with clarity, but nothing could distinguish them now.

Hrothgir gripped the pommel of his war maul, its head resting against the sour earth. His kin knew him as Stone Among the Troubled Sky. He was implacable, their anchor, never giving voice to pain or joy or rage. Some in his pack believed he lacked the feeling to do so, but those fires smouldered within him as surely as in any of the rout. His resolve buried such emotions, locking his passion away beneath glaciers of discipline – discipline that had been tested by this hunt.

Even through their respirator vox grills, the Space Wolves could smell air thick with spice and cloying sweetness twisting through the blood and smoke of the battlefield. Dozens of moons hung in the transient skies like pearls cast into a chemical spill. They appeared and collapsed, grew faces and devoured each other with fangs hewn from mountain ranges.

Hrothgir wanted to spit, the utter wrongness of the place raising his hackles. He did not dwell upon the madness that surrounded them. The pack leader's restraint kept that door closed. His warriors ran fingers over worn fetishes and talismans. He could hear them whisper to one another.

'How long have we been here?'

'Who can say? Even time is poisoned here.'

'...*maleficarum* infests everything...'

'...every grain of sand...'

'...each breath of air...'

Hrothgir's grip tightened around his maul's haft in a creak of worn

leather. They had been within the miasma too long. He watched as Vyght crouched amidst the fallen, the Wolf Priest attending to the rituals of the dead.

‘Our hunt is finished,’ said Vyght. He looked up at Hrothgir from behind his canine death mask. ‘And we shall not return to the Hearthworld empty-handed.’

Hrothgir relived dealing the killing blow perfectly.

*The force of the strike tore the traitor swordsman’s sneering head from his shoulders in a fountain of blood as dark as midnight. The trembling faces pressing against the surface of Lucius’ armour shrieked, babbling incoherencies with dozens of overlapping voices. The ancient war-plate shivered, draining of its violet colour and fragmenting like shattered glass.*

*Hrothgir reached down, then snatched his hand back as the headless body disintegrated into a heap of boiling ash. The detritus leapt upon the wind, corkscrewing in whorls that sparked and dispersed into smoke and nothing. All that remained of Lucius the Eternal was the silver blade he had carried, scarlet with the blood of Hrothgir’s kin.*

*Taking the sword from the ground, Hrothgir, Stone Among the Troubled Sky, felt something quiver within him, straining against the barricades of his resolve.*

*For thousands of years this fiend had assailed the dominion of the Allfather. The blood of millions – men, kings, Space Marines, was on his hands. He was a singular enemy of mankind, and on this day, Hrothgir had defeated him, and sent him screaming into oblivion.*

*Hrothgir felt it for an instant, as if his hearts had pushed ice water through his veins for a single beat. He experienced something he had denied himself all his life, crushed beneath discipline and control.*

*He felt triumph.*

Hrothgir buried the memory of his conceit, shaking away the reverie and snarling at his lapse of control. He turned his head to regard Vyght, as the Wolf Priest rose from his ministrations.

‘Our brothers?’ Hrothgir asked, his voice gravelly.

‘Their essence is tainted,’ growled Vyght from his wolf skull helm, shaking blood from the Fang of Morkai he had used to remove the progenoids from the dead. ‘It is lost to us,’

Hrothgir said nothing, his eyes locked to the silver blade held in his hands. The gleam of the aether's light twitched and pulsed over its blasphemous edge. He did not remember drawing the sword from where he had hung it on his belt, as his war maul lay forgotten in the dust.

'We cannot tarry here any longer,' said Vyght, leaning closer. 'This place is stirring a darkness within us. We must be the lightning, gone before the thunder comes.'

'Where are his brothers?' Hrothgir asked, gesturing to the corpses layering the ground. 'We slaughtered mortals, thin-blooded slaves fit to be nothing but carrion. Our prey commanded Space Marines, ancient killers of their thrice-damned Legion. There is nothing of them?'

It was then that Hrothgir heard it. A laboured, wracking choke, emanating from the mounds of corpses not yet set to the flame. The Space Wolves searched the butcher's carpet, finding the source of the noise shivering amongst its foul departed brethren. Gone from the waist down, tattered strings of broken flesh trailing from its severed torso, something that may have once been human pulled itself to the surface from the mounds of dead, still drawing fevered breath.

It did not surprise Hrothgir. Half a man could take hours to scream out the remainder of his life, a fact he had known long before he had ascended to stand among the *Einherjar*. What surprised Hrothgir was the noise coming from the wretch.

It was laughter.

'He'll come back,' said the twisted fiend between snarls of agony, its delirious voice wet with blood. 'He *always* comes back.'

Hrothgir crossed the distance between them in four strides, standing to loom over the dying creature. He looked down as the fiend returned his gaze from a face flayed of its skin, the raw glistening muscle covered in twitching blasphemous runes. Age, gender, nothing was discernable, other than a lifetime of desecration. A single eye, jaundiced and bloodshot, bulged as it laughed again.

'He is *eternal*, you will see.'

A twitch skittered up Hrothgir's face. Lucius' sword was gripped tightly in his fist. With slow, almost contemplative care, Hrothgir placed his boot over the wretch's head. He did not stamp down, but slowly pressed his foot to the ground. The fiend's laughter became shrieks of agony, shot through

with breathless moans as its skull flexed under the titanic strain.

‘Thank... you,’ the wretch choked in reed-thin adoration, before its skull collapsed like a rotten fruit. Hrothgir wiped the detritus from his boot, breathing out the toxic mist that shrouded the world and shaking away the shudder climbing his spine. He turned to his pack.

‘We leave,’ he nodded to Tohern. ‘Everything burns.’

Silent, Tohern stepped forward and levelled his flamer upon the pack’s dead. With a shriek of igniting promethium, the Space Wolf enveloped the fallen in flames. The only sound transcending the screaming fire was the howling dirge of the Wolves left standing.

The pack made the trek across the blighted plains to a clearing, trudging shin-deep through the mud of the human dead. The skies above had quieted in the time since the murdermake had ceased, but still twitched and flowed in incomprehensible patterns. The Wolves averted their gaze, keeping their eyes low and fighting the ticks and twitches that skittered over their flesh like phantom spiders.

A Thunderhawk in the storm-grey livery of the rout screamed down from orbit to receive them. Hrothgir and his pack filed up the embarkation ramp into the gunship, as slack grey servitors fused to heavy bolter turrets panned the landscape for threats.

As the boarding ramp sealed and the gunship’s retros fired to lift them back into orbit, the pack removed their helms with gasps of venting air pressure. Scarred faces and sweat-matted beards glistened in the ochre light from the Thunderhawk’s hold. Only Vyght remained hidden behind his death mask.

Hrothgir looked from brother to brother with silver eyes sunken into a face of weathered flesh, seeing the bone-deep weariness and disquiet sown amongst his pack that mirrored what he felt within himself. This hunt had cost them dearly, in oath-sworn brothers and exposure to the rampant *maleficarum* of the Eye’s frontier.

‘Kindred,’ said Vyght, standing in the troop hold as the gunship blasted through the atmosphere. ‘We have shed blood and more in this hunt. Now it is finished. We sail back to the Aett in victory, and the sagas of this day shall echo from its walls until time ceases. Let us rejoice and honor our fallen.’

Hrothgir was not listening. All he could hear was the laughter of the cultist, dying upon the infernal soil of the daemon world.

*He always comes back.*

Vyght spread his arms wide. ‘We are going home.’

*He fell. Tumbling, spinning end over end through endless black. Hurling faster and faster as faces resolved from the darkness, pale hands reaching, enveloping him. A shadow fell across him, impossible in the complete black, closing over him to the echo of screaming laughter—*

Hrothgir’s eyes snapped open. Torchlight bathed the stone walls of the feasting hall from blazing coal pits, illuminating the long table around which the pack sat. A procession of masked thralls brought racks of roasted meat and *mjod* in large wooden bowls, special reserves set aside for the feast to mark the conclusion of their hunt.

The Wolves had removed their power armour, leaving it below in the holds of the *Reiodi* to be thrice-purified and cleansed of the taint of the maelstrom. They wore jerkins of beaten leather, festooned with knotwork patterns of each warrior’s own design. Only Vyght, as always, remained in his armour. Serfs encircled him, cleansing his war-plate and enveloping him in fragrant smoke from censers that they swung about his figure as they chanted wards against sorcery.

The mood of the pack had lightened, and the warriors sang and joked among one another. The feast at a hunt’s end served not only as a celebration of victory, but as a funerary rite for those who fell bringing their prey to its end. Upon their return to Fenris, the names of the dead would be inscribed within the Aett, where all would remember their names and deeds.

Set upon an iron rack at the center of the feasting table, the sword of Lucius the Eternal gleamed in the firelight, the spoils of their triumph elevated for all to see. Hrothgir was transfixed by it. For all the time they had pursued Lucius, all the worlds the rout had burned for the sin of his touch, for all the death it had taken to get to him – the hunt had ended too quickly. Their prey had fallen too easily.

*Where were his brothers?*

Hrothgir looked down upon his hands, his severe features creasing into a frown. New scars covered his weather-beaten skin, threaded in crimson

and black. Unease crawled over him like cold oil. With the surgeries and ministrations of the flesh-smiths at the time of his ascension, it was impossible for Hrothgir to truly forget anything. Yet he could not recall earning these scars, or the strange, precise patterns they described.

Vyght stood, scattering the serfs surrounding him and rapping an armoured fist upon the table to gather the pack's attention. 'Brothers, our hunt is over. A wretched champion of the Archenemy is fallen, and we return to Fenris in glorious victory.' The Wolf Priest turned to Hrothgir. 'Stone Among the Troubled Sky, it is your right to speak the saga of this hunt, that all of the *Einherjar* shall sing it across the Allfather's domain.'

The pack drummed their fists against the table. Hrothgir rose slowly, blinking to focus. A strange odor filled his nostrils, as if his flesh were rotting. His head throbbed in rhythm with the beat of his hearts, as fever sweat glistened on his brow.

'My *thegn*?' asked Vyght, his voice betraying the concern his masked face denied.

'It is nothing.' Hrothgir replied, his voice thin. He took the bowl of mjod offered to him, and raised it before his brothers. He drew breath to speak, but faltered. His vision blurred, shot through with slashes of red. The bowl fell from his hand, crashing to the stone floor as Hrothgir fell to his knees.

'Thegn!' Tohern rushed to Hrothgir's side. He threw his arm out, pushing Tohern back as he gasped for breath. His back arched, and he retched a torrent of black sludge onto the floor. Hrothgir's head sank to the ground, and he snarled as his skin rippled and twitched.

The pack tensed, eyes wide. For all the superhuman strength and nobility the inheritance of Leman Russ bestowed upon the Space Wolves, it also conferred an affliction, locked away deep within their blood.

'Is this—' Tohern began to say, his voice guttural as his own blood began to boil.

'Away from him!' Vyght shouted. 'This is not the curse!'

Hrothgir roared as his musculature swelled, his skin splitting like oil-soaked canvas. His flesh sloughed from his frame in greasy ribbons, revealing the pulsing, bleeding meat beneath. His face contorted, twisting and snapping as the bones reformed. Scars etched themselves over his entire body, like some obscene cartographer's survey of the Eye itself.

The Space Wolf's howl became inhuman, beyond pain, beyond horror.

His head collapsed, sinking into his ribcage until his face pressed out from beneath the meat of his chest. Another howling face pressed alongside Hrothgir's, then another, and another, covering his torso in wailing facades.

Hrothgir's naked muscle petrified, calcifying into a hardened shell. The chrysalis snapped, forming individual ridged plates. Blasphemous sigils wormed to the surface, and a knob of obscene flesh swelled between his shoulders. With a sickening wet snap, a skull formed, sheathed in crimson muscle and pale, tortured skin.

Hrothgir's screaming never ceased, joining the countless writhing faces that covered the armour. With a shuddering gasp, Lucius the Eternal stood, turning toward the gathered Space Wolves.

'Ah, cousins,' Lucius smiled, 'it is *so* good to be back.'

The Wolves roared. Something snapped within them. The final barricade holding back the darkness within, eroded to gossamer from the madness of the hunt, was finally breached. Their howls deepened, becoming bestial and feral. Fangs punched out from protruding snouts as their bodies became swollen, and hooked claws burst from their fingers. Their jerkins split and tore as their bodies mutated, morphing into hulking lupine monstrosities. The transformed Space Wolves bared their fangs at Lucius, froth foaming from snapping jaws as they moved to surround him.

*Wulfen.* Lucius' grin grew wider. It had been centuries since he had last seen their kind. This would be interesting.

Lucius flexed his right arm. With a wet snap of tearing sinew, a rope of barbed meat slithered down to the floor, coiling around the Chaos champion's forearm. The lash chattered and hissed, the daemon caged within it starving for blood. He threw the whip forward, wrapping it around the handle of his sabre and hauling it back to him. He caught the sword, rolling his wrist and slicing the air.

'Well?' Lucius asked. 'Who's first?'

The *Wulfen* leapt at him. Lucius sidestepped one, using the beast's momentum to cleave it in half upon the blade of his sabre. He swept the weapon up to block another's slashing claws, severing the creature's forearms in a fountain of hot blood.

Lucius gasped as the blood splashed over his face. The first bloodshed upon his return to the living always delivered the highest ecstasy, and he

shuddered as he drank the sensation in. He almost didn't see the roaring Space Wolf rushing him, drunkenly swaying aside as it skidded past him.

Lucius hurled his whip toward the Wulfen. The lash closed around its head, venomous barbs sinking into flesh. Lucius hauled back, tearing the creature's head from its shoulders in a welter of gore and torn cartilage. The lash drank deep of the blood and spinal fluid pulsing from the severed head, casting aside a shriveled, shrunken lump of flesh and skull to the floor when it had had its fill.

Lucius weaved through a barrage of claws and snapping jaws, disemboweled another Wulfen with a blinding series of lightning-fast slashes, and spun to face the last of their number. He could still see cracked plates of ebon power armour beneath the thick fur of the beast, as it glared at him with blazing amber eyes.

Lucius swung his lash. The Wulfen charged, ducking beneath and clear. It rolled to the side as Lucius lunged with a thrust of his sword, the blade lacerating its flank without inflicting a mortal wound.

The Space Wolf slashed at Lucius, its claws tearing deep gouges into his armour. It drew back to strike again, but faltered as it met the visage of Hrothgir screaming from beneath the plate. It hesitated for a heartbeat; all the opening Lucius required.

Lucius snarled, pistoning a fist into the Wulfen's jaw and tackling it to the ground. The Chaos Space Marine seized his foe's throat in a stranglehold, and began to squeeze.

'I would have expected barbarians to shun the perfection of the duel,' Lucius hissed as he tightened his grip. 'But even in your mongrel eyes I see the shock you cannot hide. I should not be. Your brother *killed* me.'

The Wulfen that had once been Vyght bucked, snarling as it thrashed to displace the champion of Chaos. Lucius brought his scarred head down in a savage headbutt, smashing the creature's head against the stone floor.

'Do *not* interrupt. How long was I dead to you? Hours? Days?' Lucius leaned an inch from the stunned Wulfen's face. 'I fell for eternity, drowning in the dregs that flood the lands of the dead. But I am Eternal, and for my sins, the warp granted me vindication. All I needed was a single thing.'

Lucius' lips peeled back further from black gums. 'Pride. A moment of vanity, the merest aggrandisement by your mongrel chieftain blazed like a

beacon in the aether. I followed it, to be reborn and take his flesh as my own. I wanted this ship, and all I had to do to get it was die.'

The Wulfen's eyes refocused, its pupils sable pinpricks in molten amber. It roared from frothing jaws, freeing an arm to rake its claws across Lucius' face. Viscous black fluid burst in gouts from the champion's rent flesh as his head snapped back.

Lucius grappled with the Wulfen, snarling as he looped his lash around its throat. The daemonic whip constricted, strangling the life from the Space Wolf.

'If you are no better than beasts, then I shall butcher you like beasts!'

The Wulfen's eyes bulged, blooming crimson as capillaries ruptured. 'More,' it growled in a feral choke, fighting to push the words between monstrous fangs. 'More will come.'

Lucius leaned closer, grinning as his serpentine tongue slithered between his pointed teeth. 'Cousin, I am counting on it.' He pried the Wulfen's jaws open and drove his sword down through to the stone floor. Lucius wrenched the blade free and pushed himself off the beast's twitching chest, standing as its blood emptied over his boots in a flood.

Lucius stood in the feasting hall, alone but for the crackle of fires and the whispers within his mind. The trapped souls of his armour moaned, each shackled to the Chaos Space Marine as the price for defeating him in battle. Each surrendering their flesh upon the altar of the Eternal's rebirth.

Lucius clenched a fist, the flesh numb and twitching against his control. He frowned. Less and less of him was returning. Something cold and ancient was growing over the parts he had been forced to leave behind, coiled dormant behind his eyes. It strained at the periphery of Lucius' mind, patient as it swelled into the gaps that oblivion had stripped away to claim for its own.

Lucius felt it taking root, tasting reality with probing gossamer fronds. He wondered how long until nothing of him remained, until he died for the last time.

*What would emerge from death on the day he ceased to be Eternal?*

Lucius cast the rumination aside to relish the moment. He lifted an arm of a dead Wulfen by the wrist, and swung his blade. Blood flecked the walls and floor as he set about his task, silent but for the song of steel

slicing flesh and snapping bone. He looked over the feasting hall he had made into an abattoir, the stone floor strewn with butchered remains scattered in concentric circles around him.

Lucius closed his eyes, and loosened his grip over the anguished souls bound within his armour.

The faces screamed, desperate to claw themselves free. The shriek tore through reality, through the decks of the *Reiodi* and into the turbulent void beyond, reaching those who waited in silence.

‘Brothers, come to me.’

The severed limbs and bodies trembled, riming with frost as they quivered and shook in the freezing air. Boils bloomed from the stump of an arm, swelling and expanding like cancerous tumors. They continued to grow, darkening to the color of spoiled meat. Each section of corpse reacted the same, budding and growing. Torsos sprouted new arms and legs. Heads grew bodies, and orphaned limbs generated new flesh sheathed in frozen brackish slime.

Blood and mucus wept from the walls, and the flames within the coal pits undulated in the full spectrum of unnatural colours. Lucius smiled, his serpent’s tongue tasting the blood running from his nose as the ritual continued.

The emergent forms coalesced. Armour of sable and mauve hardened like carapace. Weapons materialized, clenched in mailed fists, and screams tore from the grilles of daemonic helms from the agony of the summoning.

With a howling gale, the fires in the feasting hall were extinguished. Twelve Chaos Space Marines, fallen angels of the Emperor’s Children bound in service to Lucius the Eternal, rose to stand around their lord.

Karonatius strode forward in twisted armour of jagged violet teeth that wept molten gold. ‘Eternal, you are whole again.’

Lucius nodded to his lieutenant. ‘Purge the ship. Kill any that resist but leave those I spoke of alive. They will be needed. Go.’

Karonatius slammed a fist against the defiled imperial eagle on his breastplate, its skeletal wings seeming to twitch with anguished life. He drew a scimitar, its blade screaming as a power field enveloped it in killing light, and marched from the chamber with Lucius’ warriors. Lucius opened a vox channel on his armour, uttering a single name.

‘Clarion.’

For a moment, he heard nothing but faulty static, before he received a reply.

‘*Master,*’ it spoke with a child’s voice, ‘*you have returned to us.*’

‘Summon the fleet,’ said Lucius. ‘Do not concern yourself with the wolves’ guns, they will be silent by the time you arrive.’

‘*Tell me, lord,*’ Clarion hissed, her voice betraying her smile, ‘*how long was it this time?*’

‘Just bring the fleet,’ Lucius snarled. ‘We have what we came here for.’

Much of the *Reiodi*’s crew had resisted Lucius’ warband as they rampaged through the ship’s decks, songs of Fenris streaming from their lips as they defied the invaders. Their skins now covered the walls of the bridge, flayed faces gazing down upon Lucius and his warriors. He had transported mutated slaves from his armada to replace the butchered crew, keeping those who served critical roles aboard the Fenrisian warship alive. One such wretch arrived upon the command deck as the portal to the chamber rumbled open on smooth hydraulics.

Skeletally thin and frail, the astropath limped forward in chains. Karonatius dragged him onward, and threw him at Lucius’ feet. The blind psyker trembled, rising and steadying himself on the bronze staff he carried. He looked up with eyes stitched shut with silver sutures, and cried out as he beheld Lucius.

Through his mind’s eye, the astropath saw dozens of souls, howling and writhing around each other, fettered to the black diamond will of the Chaos Space Marine. The essences of ancient warriors long dead, and vicious warlords from beyond the Eye of Terror. He saw the soul of Lord Hrothgir, howling in the anguish of his eternal prison. Dozens of spirits inhabited the flesh of the fallen Space Marine simultaneously, the abominable impossibility of it driving the ailing psyker back to his knees.

‘What *are* you?’ the astropath faltered.

Lucius smirked. ‘I am the one who decides whether your skin stays with you or joins your comrades’ on the walls.’ He pointed at the flayed hides with his sabre as his lash slithered restlessly at his feet.

‘The Sky Warriors will not be cowed by you,’ said the astropath, the strength of his words marred by the tremors in his voice. ‘They will come

and finish what my lord started.’

‘Oh?’ Lucius replied, tilting his head. ‘Well, that certainly saves me the effort of going to them, does it not? Still,’ he spread his arms, gesturing to the walls of the Space Wolves vessel around them, ‘it would seem wasteful not to make use of this ship. They are expecting the return of heroes in triumph, but how might they receive me in the halls of their mountain bastion? Your lords do so love surprises.’

The thought shivered over Lucius’ mind. An obsession that had consumed him for nearly a century. The chance to duel one who had endured the millennia he and his fallen kindred had spent in exile. A singular warrior, now their ancient Wolf King. Lucius had crossed paths with the Fell-Handed in the years of the Great Crusade, and there were no others save the false Emperor himself that still drew breath from that time.

He would strike a blow so severe that they would have no choice but to rouse Bjorn to face him. And he would use this ship to do it.

The subterfuge rankled Lucius, but a pleasure postponed made it all the more satisfying at its climax. He would spill blood over the snow of their mountain citadel. He would succeed where a primarch had failed. Lucius shuddered, savoring the cloying blasphemy of the thought.

But to do so, he would need to bleed the defenses of Fenris white. When they were isolated and desperate, with their fleets burning, Lucius would have the contest he so craved.

‘Now,’ Lucius purred. ‘Scream out into the stars, little herald of Fenris.’ The Eternal leaned forward in the throne. Cupping the man’s head in one clawed hand, Lucius grinned as he savoured the horror wracking the stricken astropath.

‘And bring me more wolves.’

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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