

The cover art depicts a chaotic battle scene. In the center, Russ, a character with a mohawk and a large, blue, segmented body, is shown in a dynamic, forward-leaning pose. He has a determined, almost angry expression. To his left, a large, red, multi-limbed Chaos Daemon with glowing yellow eyes and orange markings on its body is lunging towards him. In the background, other characters are visible: a Space Marine in blue armor is flying through the air, and another character is partially visible on the left. The setting appears to be a dark, industrial or war-torn environment with smoke and fire. At the top, a dark banner contains the text 'WARHAMMER 40,000'. In the top right corner, there is a logo for 'WAR ZONE FENRIS' featuring a stylized red and black symbol.

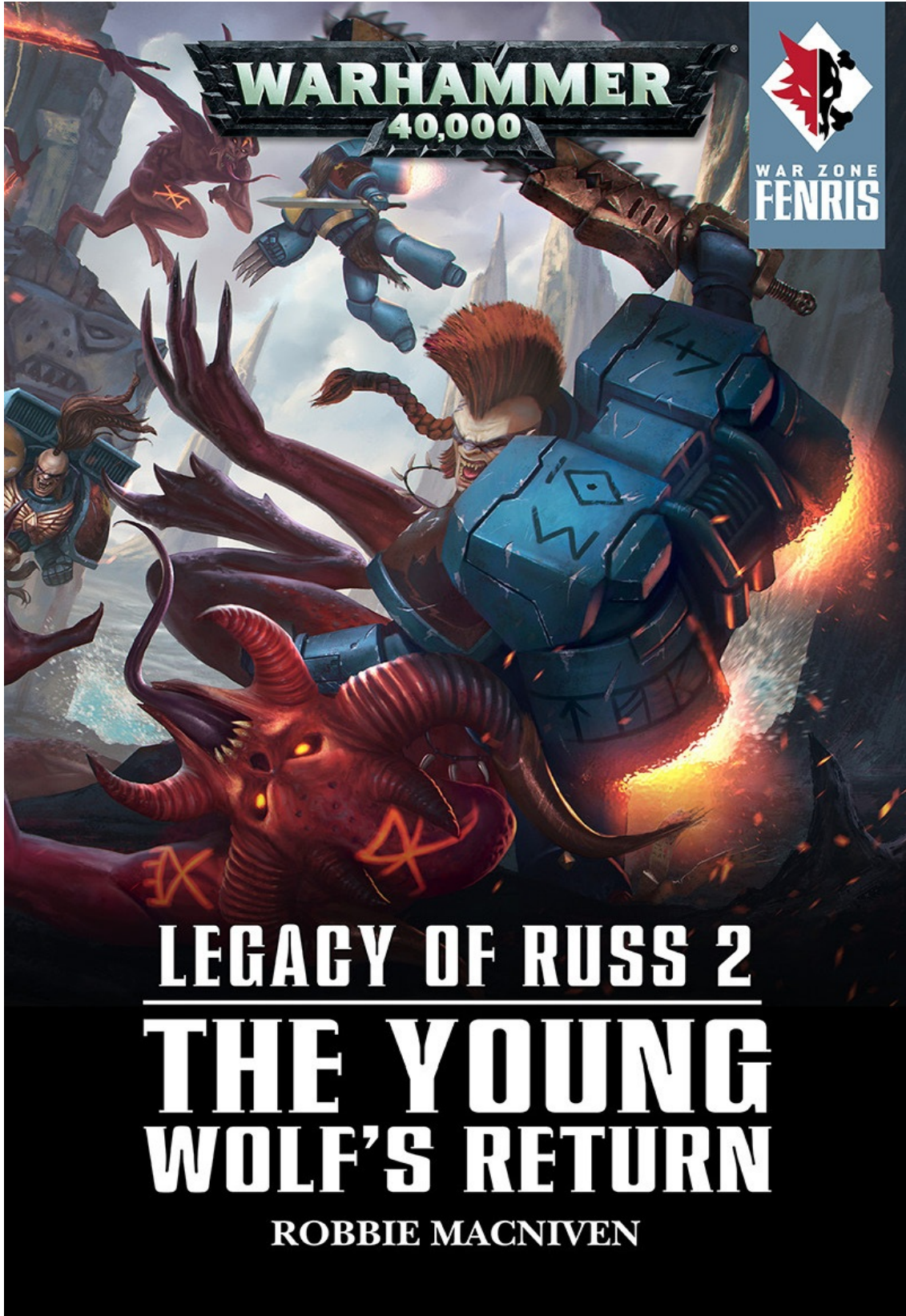
WARHAMMER
40,000

WAR ZONE
FENRIS

LEGACY OF RUSS 2

**THE YOUNG
WOLF'S RETURN**

ROBBIE MACNIVEN



WARHAMMER
40,000



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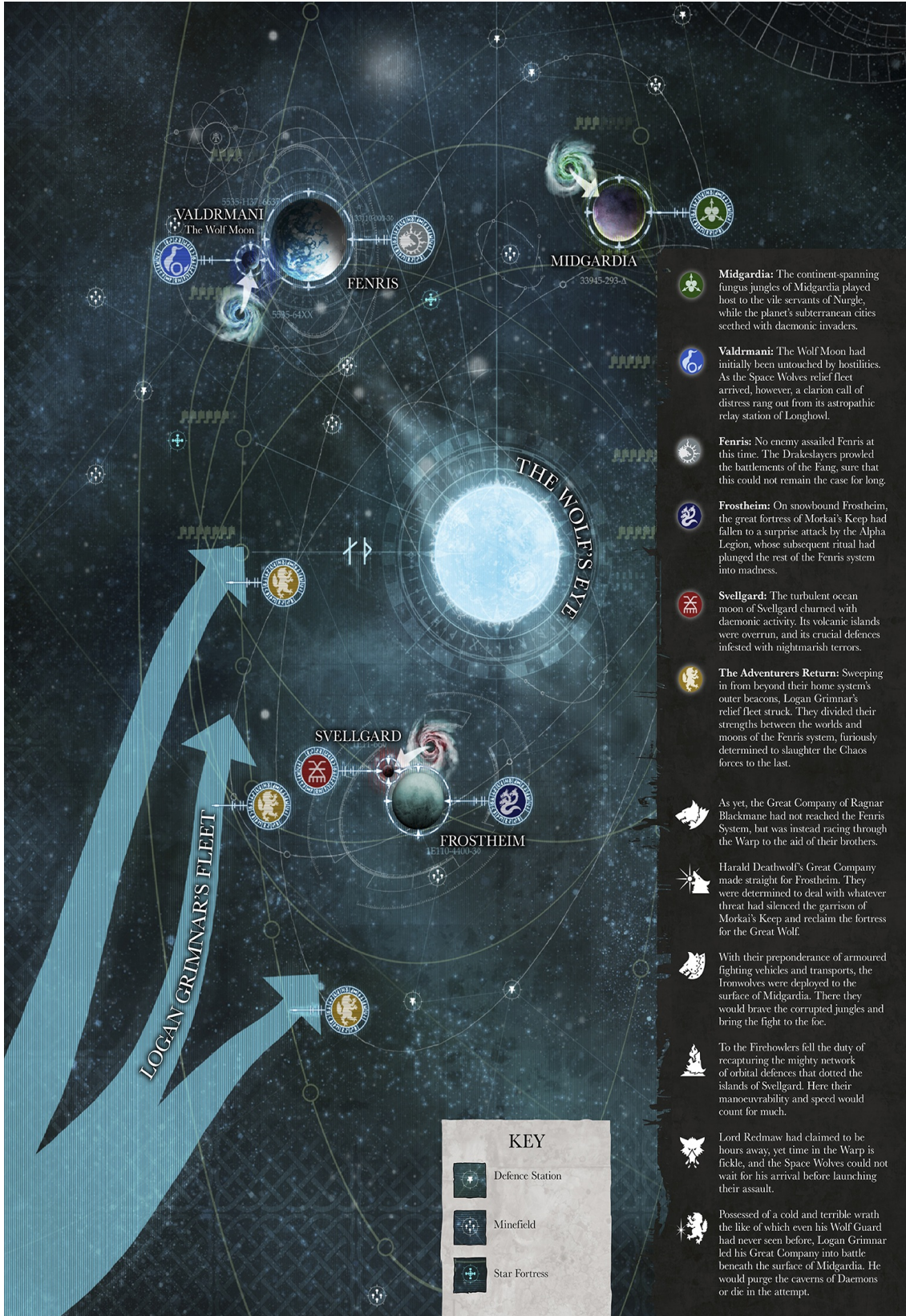
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5533-1137-6633
VALDRMANI
 The Wolf Moon

33714300-33
FENRIS
 5993-64XX

33945-293-A
MIDGARDIA

THE WOLF'S EYE









SVELLGARD

1E110-H00-30
FROSTHEIM

LOGAN GRIMMAR'S FLEET

KEY

-  Defence Station
-  Minefield
-  Star Fortress

-  **Midgardia:** The continent-spanning fungus jungles of Midgardia played host to the vile servants of Nurgle, while the planet's subterranean cities seethed with daemonic invaders.
-  **Valdrmani:** The Wolf Moon had initially been untouched by hostilities. As the Space Wolves relief fleet arrived, however, a clarion call of distress rang out from its astropathic relay station of Longhowl.
-  **Fenris:** No enemy assailed Fenris at this time. The Drakeslayers prowled the battlements of the Fang, sure that this could not remain the case for long.
-  **Frostheim:** On snowbound Frostheim, the great fortress of Morkai's Keep had fallen to a surprise attack by the Alpha Legion, whose subsequent ritual had plunged the rest of the Fenris system into madness.
-  **Svellgard:** The turbulent ocean moon of Svellgard churned with daemonic activity. Its volcanic islands were overrun, and its crucial defences infested with nightmarish terrors.
-  **The Adventurers Return:** Sweeping in from beyond their home system's outer beacons, Logan Grimmar's relief fleet struck. They divided their strengths between the worlds and moons of the Fenris system, furiously determined to slaughter the Chaos forces to the last.
-  As yet, the Great Company of Ragnar Blackmane had not reached the Fenris System, but was instead racing through the Warp to the aid of their brothers.
-  Harald Deathwolf's Great Company made straight for Frostheim. They were determined to deal with whatever threat had silenced the garrison of Morkai's Keep and reclaim the fortress for the Great Wolf.
-  With their preponderance of armoured fighting vehicles and transports, the Ironwolves were deployed to the surface of Midgardia. There they would brave the corrupted jungles and bring the fight to the foe.
-  To the Firehowlers fell the duty of recapturing the mighty network of orbital defences that dotted the islands of Svellgard. Here their manoeuvrability and speed would count for much.
-  Lord Redmaw had claimed to be hours away, yet time in the Warp is fickle, and the Space Wolves could not wait for his arrival before launching their assault.
-  Possessed of a cold and terrible wrath the like of which even his Wolf Guard had never seen before, Logan Grimmar led his Great Company into battle beneath the surface of Midgardia. He would purge the caverns of Daemons or die in the attempt.

THE YOUNG WOLF'S RETURN

Robbie MacNiven

The Rock, in high orbit above Midgardia

Interrogator-Chaplain Elezar knelt, his black power armour's artificial fibre bundles whirring and clicking softly with the movement. The ceramite of his knee plate grated against the stone floor of the reclusiam-cell. Wordlessly, he genuflected to the only object occupying the tiny space except his meditation cot – the winged sword sigil of the Dark Angels, set in brass relief upon the bare wall.

For a moment he was silent and still, the only sensation the distant vibration of the Rock's mighty plasma drives, many levels below. He let conscious thoughts drip from his mind, like the tallow wax from the ten thousand candles flickering in the Basilica of Repentance. He could feel the beating of his primary heart and the hum of his active battleplate, throbbing in rhythmic sympathy with his vital signs. Outside, his genhanced hearing detected the approach of armoured footfalls, but he ignored them. Like a prisoner in the Rock's deepest dungeons, he chained his mind in impenetrable darkness, link by link, seeking the oblivion that would let him give proper and meaningful veneration to the primarch and the Emperor.

Just as words formed on his lips, he heard the hiss of his cell door behind him. In an instant he was back on his feet, but the oaths died in his throat as he turned towards the figure who had interrupted his private worship.

'My apologies, Brother-Chaplain,' Azrael said, stepping into the small space. The door whispered shut behind him.

'Supreme Grand Master,' Elezar said, bowing his head. 'No apologies are needed. You simply surprised me.'

'And that in itself no mean feat, I am sure,' the hooded master of the

Unforgiven said, returning Elezar's bow with a nod. 'I wished to speak with you privately, and I could think of no better place than this. It concerns the nature of our hunt, and the exposed position we find ourselves in.'

'Yes, lord. What do you wish of me?'

'We must remain ever-vigilant, Brother Elezar. Our enemies circle us like wolves, looking for any sign of weakness, waiting for the opportune moment to strike.'

'I understand, lord. My vigilance is unfaltering.'

'That is true,' the Supreme Grand Master continued, pacing behind him. 'You have been chosen for great things, Elezar. You are indeed blessed.' The chaplain turned.

'I am glad you believe so. I live to serve the Chapter and the Emperor.'

'Of course, of course.' Azrael continued to circle him. 'It is decided then. You shall help me to announce it.'

'Announce what?' Beneath the shadows of his cowl, Azrael smiled more broadly than Elezar had ever seen him smile before, spreading his arms as wide as the cell's confines would allow.

'His return, of course.'

'Whose return? I don't understand.'

But Azrael didn't reply. Like a bolt of lightning, he struck Elezar, and the Dark Angel knew no more.

Aalsund Island, Svellgard

The impact of Sven Bloodhowl's boot pulped a daemonette's skull with a hideous crunch. The Wolf Lord landed atop the body as it came apart, the impact grinding the remains into Svellgard's hard-packed tundra.

The counter-attack was going in hard. The wyrdlings were still amassing on the islands around the World Wolf's Lair missile control base, their shrieks and screams vibrating the cold, wind-lashed air. Sven, as ever, led from the fore.

There was no space to swing Frostclaw. They were all around him. The Wolf Lord used his short chainsword, Firefang, to gut the clutch of she-daemons pressing close as lovers, spinning in a tight, ichor-splattered circle. That gave him more room. He choked Frostclaw's grip near the top of the haft, using the frost axe in tight, hard chops. Claws and talons rained down on the Wolf's armour, seeking weak points, scarring the mist-grey plate silver. None found their mark. Sven was a master of this form of warfare; surrounded, he kept

moving, kept killing, until he'd carved out half a dozen yards of space. Enough room to slip his hand further down Frostclaw's slick handle and start swinging it properly.

That was when the real slaughter began.

Sven laughed as he killed. The battle-joy was on him, the axe-song that sung more sweetly than the fairest *skjalda*. Either side of him his Bloodguard matched their lord, each one a blur of controlled, focused fury. They had dropped from *Godspear's* open hold on pillars of fire, their jump packs keening. Together they'd fallen like the warrior-kings of the old sagas, bolts of lightning hammering into the nest of wyrdlings crowning the island's peak. For a few long, bloody seconds, each Space Marine was alone amidst a sea of tentacles, claws and snapping maws.

They relished it.

Olaf Blackstone's wolf claws savaged wyrdflesh left and right, swiftly matting his long, white pelt with stinking ichor. Torvind Morkai, the youngest of all Sven's Wolf Guard, wielded his rune-carved Fenrisian blade in a blinding arc, his swordsmanship so swift that crimson daemons burst apart in fountains of gore before they could even bring their brass-hilted blades to bear. A dozen yards away Kregga Longtooth smashed his crackling power fist into the chassis of a nightmarish Khornate artillery piece, its yawning skull-maw cannon useless at such close range. A single blow sent twisted metal and shattered skulls slamming into the nearest daemons, flinging the entire infernal device onto its side with a shriek of grinding, broken warp-tech.

Nearest to Sven himself were Istun and Uuntir, the former cleaving open the skull of a bloated plague beast with a blow from his twin-headed power axe, the latter using his scarred storm shield to batter a clutch of twisting, writhing horrors back onto the blades of the frenzied swordlings behind them. Any that tried to squirm round his guard were met with efficient blows from the Wolf Guard's thunder hammer, each short strike accompanied by the fearsome weapon's booming discharge.

As he killed, Sven was only half aware of the carnage unleashed by his personal champions. They were his retinue, his chosen, skilled even among the ranks of his Great Company's three Wolf Guard packs. Each was a warrior-king, their flesh and armour inked and carved with runes telling of their numberless sagas, their blades notched but ever-keen. Sven had slaughtered tyrants and broken armies with them at his side for almost a century.

This was merely sport.

‘On my mark, disengage,’ he ordered, grunting as Frostclaw bit through the rotting hide of a plaguebearer, cleaving the shambling monstrosity from collarbone to groin. *Godspear* passed above the melee, bolters hammering death into the undulating sea of terrors surrounding the Space Wolves. The Thunderhawk’s disembarkation ramp was still down.

‘Mark,’ Sven said, activating his jump pack, Longleap. With a burst of supercharged power it slammed him through the downdraft of the Thunderhawk’s turbofans, the sudden acceleration drawing a growl of exhilaration from his throat. The young Wolf Lord angled his leap over the edge of *Godspear*’s ramp, auto-stabilisers thumping as he hit the deck. With a skill that spoke of decades of experience, his Wolf Guard followed him up, directly into the gunship’s hold. He made way for them, keying his vox as he looked down into the swarm of shrieking monstrosities.

‘Drakebanes, do you think you can do better?’

The Sky Claws answered with chainswords and howls rather than words. In twos they pitched over the ramp of *Wolfdawn*, the other Thunderhawk holding station a little further down the slope. Jump packs flared as they neared the ground, only fractionally arresting their freefall. There was a string of brutal crunches as they slammed into the daemons below, the impacts audible even over the scream of *Godspear*’s engines.

Sven watched them closely as the Thunderhawk banked round, its bolters still raking those daemons swarming over the hilltop. As far as the Wolf Lord was concerned, age and experience came a poor second to battle-hunger and skill. The promotion of the likes of the young redhead Torvind to his Bloodguard, straight from the ranks of the Blood Claws, was a perfect example of his philosophy. The Drakebanes had already fought hard today to purge the missile launch nexus that was the World Wolf’s Lair, but beneath the eye of their vigorous young jarl none would tire. The surface-to-orbit weapons silos buried deep beneath the tundra of Svellgard’s islands were vital to the system’s defences. They could not be overrun, especially not the control centre that constituted the Lair.

‘Young Veslar shows promise,’ Olaf said, joining Sven at the open ramp. If it weren’t for the daemoniac gore that clogged his wolf claws and covered him from boot to topknot, there would have been no indication that the old Bloodguard had been locked in furious combat mere moments before.

‘I prefer Mourkyn,’ Sven said, watching as the Sky Claws carved their way through the wyrdlings covering the lower slopes. Mourkyn was using his jump

pack for repeated short combat leaps. Even from a distance his bared face was visibly twisted with battle-glee as he pounded down again and again into the creatures scrambling to get at him, splitting skulls and snapping spines with his armoured weight.

‘He’ll rupture his pack if he keeps that up,’ Olaf said stoically. ‘The boy needs to learn to respect the spirits of his weaponry. And besides, Veslar shows more leadership. The pack follows him instinctively.’

That much Sven couldn’t deny. Veslar was at the heart of a small wedge of three other Sky Claws, the improvised formation forging ahead of the rest of the Drakebanes as they made for the island’s peak. They moved with a natural fluidity, covering one another’s weaknesses, striking together wherever the daemonic tied eddied or parted.

‘We don’t need leadership as long as you or I live, long-tooth,’ Sven joked, straight-faced. The flashing of an incoming transmission rune interrupted his observations. It belonged to Yngfor Stormsson, leader of the Firemaw Long Fangs, currently overseeing the last purging of the Lair from its central control keep.

‘Speak,’ Sven ordered.

‘*My jarl, the Lair is under attack,*’ Yngfor said. ‘*More wyrdspawn are emerging from the seas all around. As many as before.*’ The thudding of heavy bolters and the whine of recharging plasma cannons was audible in the transmission’s background. Sven cursed.

‘Assume defensive positions,’ he said. ‘Occupy as many of the bunkers as you can. We are returning immediately.’

‘Yes, *my jarl.*’ Sven cut the link.

‘Trouble?’ Olaf asked.

‘Just say it,’ Sven replied. “‘I told you so.’”

‘They’re attacking the Lair again?’

‘Yes, again.’ Sven brought up the Drakebanes on the vox-net.

‘Your fun is over, pups. We’re returning to the Lair. It would seem this wyrdling filth doesn’t know when to give up.’

Morkai’s Keep, Frostheim

The wyrdling that came at Canis Wolfborn took the form of a woman. The similarities were only fleeting, for its hands ended in a pair of snapping, crab-like claws, and its flesh was mottled a dark purple. Worst was its face – a fanged,

shrieking visage that twisted with hate as it flung itself at the Space Wolf.

His instincts had been correct. While the rest of Harald Deathwolf's Great Company had been busy collecting and burning heretic dead from the battle for Morkai's Keep, he'd tracked more wyrdspawn into the depths of the ancient fortress. The place had not been fully purged after all.

The thing was fast, but so was Canis. In the tight space of the munitions shaft the daemonette had little chance to use its unnatural agility. The Space Wolf plunged one set of wolf claws into the creature's slender torso, while its own talons dragged jagged scars down his battleplate. The thing's scream turned to a shuddering gasp as it came apart in a burst of sickly sweet smoke, its physical form unmade by the killing blow.

It was not alone.

More daemonettes darted from the shadows of the munitions bunker, the air now thick with the cloying reek of their vile perfume. Canis could only take a couple of steps back up the shaft before they were on him. He sliced off one slender arm where smooth warp-flesh met claw-bone, filling the tight space with a spray of purple ichor.

'Fangir,' he snarled. His thunderwolf was behind him, and in the sloping corridor there was no hope it could get its bulk past Canis, but there was room enough for snapping jaws. It plunged past the Wolfborn, fangs ripping the daemonette's throat to the bone. The kill gave him the split-second he needed. He keyed his vox.

'The vaults of the Keep are overrun. All packs, lock on my position.' Further words were lost in the screaming of another lunging daemonette.

Inch by inch, Canis fought his way backwards. The servants of the Dark Prince threw themselves on him in ones and twos, too fast and frenzied for him to properly disengage. Nor were they just Slaanesh's breed now. Red-scaled swordlings, rancid plaguebearers, gibbering pink and blue horrors – by the time Canis and Fangir had backed their way to the top of the shaft, he knew he had not just stumbled across an isolated nest of daemoniac infestation. There was still a warp rift open, deep in the vaults of Morkai's Keep.

He disembowelled a swordling as it lunged at him, its wicked black blade glancing off his breastplate. The daemon burst apart in a shower of stinking offal. Beside Canis, Fangir snapped off the head of another daemonette as they started to burst out of the shaft's confines.

As he reached the Keep's armoury corridor, fresh howls filled his ears. These, however, were instantly familiar to him. Chainswords roaring, the Blood Claws

of the Deathhowls rushed to his side, the scent of their pack musk instinctively reassuring. At their sides came the lesser wolves – Yorri, Vela, Scarr, three of the many Fenrisian beasts Canis counted as his pack-kin.

‘Stem this tide of filth,’ he barked at them. Neither the Deathhowls nor the wolves needed any further encouragement. They laid in with blade and fang, the confined space resounding with the crunch of torn flesh and bone and roars from throats, both daemonic and mortal.

‘*Canis, what’s happening?*’ Harald Deathwolf’s voice snapped in his ear. The Wolf Lord was still supervising the clean-up operation out on the Keep’s upper walls and surface bastions, ordering the burning of heretic dead and the honouring of the Great Company’s fallen. Canis used the space created by the arrival of the Blood Claws to step back out of the melee and answer him.

‘There are still wyrdlings in the vaults. Too many. If we do not purge them now they will resurface in even greater numbers than before.’

‘*I am on my way. Hold firm.*’

The scrape and scrabble of more claws behind him made Canis spin, fangs bared, a single savage swipe of his claws shattering the hellsword stabbing at the small of his back. The Khornate daemon hissed, resorting to its talons as it went for his exposed face. Canis leaned back with an agility that belied his armour’s bulk, servos whirring. The daemon’s lunge carried it onto one set of wolf claws, and the strike of the second bisected its horned skull. As it burst apart more of its snarling kin pressed at him, flooding upwards from another munitions shaft opposite the first.

‘Deathhowls, to me!’ Canis roared.

The Blood Claws answered, and Morkai’s Keep shook with the fury of battle. The vaults were crawling with terrors, savaging one another in their desperation to shed mortal blood. Inch by hacking, growling, grunting inch the Space Wolves managed to fight their way to a level higher, into a service corridor, before the press of wyrdflesh around them became too great. That was when Harald reached them.

The Deathwolf’s arrival was announced by Ynvir’s howl. The great Wulfen led his Murderpack into the heart of the monstrosities attempting to overwhelm Canis and the Blood Claws, bursting with frenzied strength from the confines of a grav lift at the far end of the service corridor. Frost claws glittered in the blinking illumination of the plasteel tunnel as they carved a bloody arc through the nearest spawn.

‘*Well met, Canis,*’ said Harald’s voice over the vox. A moment later the

Deathwolf jarl himself emerged from the lift in the wake of his Wulfen's assault, flanked by his dismounted thunderwolf cavalry, the Riders of Morkai.

'To the Deathwolf,' Canis shouted. With Fangir, the Fenrisian wolves and the surviving Blood Claws by his side, he cut his way towards Harald. The Wolf Lord cleaved his own path with his frost axe, Glacius, chopping down one writhing horror after another or battering them aside with his storm shield. After a few moments of brutal killing, nothing stood between the two brothers.

'The lower levels are infested,' Canis panted, grasping Harald's forearm. 'They are becoming more numerous and powerful with every moment. We must seal them off. Otherwise the whole Keep will fall.'

The Wolf Lord's reply was lost amidst the crash of falling rockcrete and the shriek of rent plasteel. A dozen yards down the corridor part of the wall came slamming inwards beneath the impact of a Khornate murder-engine. The machine, part hell-forged metal, part wyrd-spawned flesh, forced itself through the gap and onto the nearest pack of Wolves, its cog-jaw grinding through power armour as though it were wet vellum.

Canis muttered an oath and spat to ward off the thing's evil, feeling his transhuman body flush with a fresh surge of adrenaline. At last, a beast worthy enough to be hunted.

More daemons followed in the wake of the growling engine of destruction, capering pink and blue horrors that gibbered and brayed with insane glee.

Canis hurled himself at the juggernaut before it could rampage any further, catching it in the flank as its teeth sawed through the midriff of a screaming Deathhowl. His wolf claws jarred off the machine's red-plated side, leaving nothing but blackened scorch-marks. Reeking of burning blood and molten metal, the thing emitted a howl like the scraping of steel on bone. Canis struck again, with all his might. With a crack of discharging energy, the claws extending over his left fist shattered against the juggernaut's armour, their power shorting and sparking.

The machine had difficulty turning itself in the packed corridor, but its sheer bulk forced the Space Wolf back. A snap of its jaws passed inches from his exposed face, the heat that radiated from the thing's infernal maw singeing the blond hairs of his beard.

A familiar snarl sounded beside the Wolfborn, and he felt a weight push him aside. At full stretch, Yorri the wolf lunged down the corridor, leaping astride the juggernaut's spiked shoulders as it ground round to face Canis. Vela and Scarr were behind it, the packmates darting through the melee to savage the

monstrosity threatening their brother. The machine beast roared again, trying to buck Yorri off its back, but with scrabbling claws the wolf held on. And bit down.

The Fenrisian wolf's iron-hard fangs locked around the juggernaut's neck, just above its brass collar. Scarr darted beneath the creature, snapping its own jaws up around the underside of the juggernaut's throat. Cables and tendons snapped, spraying oily ichor and the defiled blood of the thousands sacrificed to summon the daemon engine. The construct's roar was cut off with a gristly snap. The wolves hung on.

Behind Canis there was a howl as Fangir powered into a brace of swordlings, red flesh disintegrating beneath the savagery of the great thunderwolf's assault. He half turned to assist his wolf-brother, but the juggernaut before him was not yet finished. It heaved its bulk forward with a choked snarl, slamming Scarr back against the wall. The wolf yelped as it was impaled by the great blade crowning the machine's snout, leaving both it and the daemon pinned against the wall as they died. Yorri and Vela whined with sympathy, tearing open the remains of the juggernaut's throat.

That was when the horrors following it through the breach leapt for the two remaining wolves, boneless arms flailing wildly as the air ignited around them. A dazzling gout of multihued wyrdflame engulfed Yorri, and it howled as its ichor-matted pelt ignited.

'*Yorri,*' Canis roared, and threw himself towards his packmate. Laughing manically, the horrors leapt into his path, each one shattering into a million multi-coloured shards as Canis struck at them. Their flames curled and licked around his body like living tentacles, singeing his battleplate black. Mere feet ahead, Yorri writhed in agony, rolling off the top of the defeated juggernaut. Vela added its howl to that of its kinbeast as one of the swordlings battling Fangir slammed its hellsword through its throat, butchering the snarling animal.

The sight of his wolves dying woke something primal inside the Feral Knight. He shuddered as he struck down more of the Tzeentch daemonspawn, a keening, inhuman noise rising in his throat. Agony spiked through his body, aching in his skull, clawing behind his eyes, biting at his fingertips. There was a crunch as he felt the fangs in his jaw distend, ripping his gums and choking his throat with the taste of his own blood. Sweat broke out across his body as his secondary heart kicked in, and his pupils dilated. The sounds of fighting faded into nothingness.

Within him the curse of the Wulfen snarled and snapped, howling to be free.

His fist shattered the last pink horror. He stumbled to Yorri's side, the wolf now

scrabbling blindly across the corridor's floor. It was immediately clear that the creature Canis had once counted as a packmate was no more. The wyrdling flames had not burned its fur and flesh, they had wrought something far worse. Even as Canis watched, the wolf's body split and broke, changing and mutating beneath the kaleidoscopic flames. A new snapping maw tore itself open in the beast's underbelly, and fresh blue eyes stared wide with agony along its flank. Spines burst free along its back and one hind leg bristled with silvery scales. The sickening stench of the warp filled Canis' hyper-sensitive nostrils.

He howled and brought his boot down on what had once been Yorri's skull, even as horns split and distended it. Still the beast twisted and yelped as the power of Chaos tore through its body. No longer thinking, Canis stamped down again and again, then started to tear into his former packmate with his lightning claws, rending open rippling flesh and cutting apart burst organs. He howled again, face and beard splattered with blood and spittle, fangs bared as he ripped asunder the creature he had once called his brother.

Finally the flames died. Finally Yorri's flesh stopped writhing and twisting. Finally the amorphous, bloody thing that had once been the proud Fenrisian wolf lay still, joining Vela and Scarr in silence. Their hunt was at an end. Canis slumped to his knees beside the deformed carcass, and howled his loss.

The howl was answered. In unison the wyrdlings assaulting the Space Wolves from either end of the corridor shrieked, pausing to vent their praise even as they were slaughtered with blade, bolt and fang.

And afterwards, for a few seconds, there was silence. Canis heard the long, slow scrape of claws in the breach behind him. Shivering with bloodlust and pain, he stood.

A swordling, larger than any he had ever seen, picked its way through the rubble of the hole smashed in the corridor wall. Its scaly, gore-red hide was armoured with plates of beaten brass and steel, while around its throat a chain thick with shattered ribs dangled. Skulls hung from more chains hooked into the flesh of the monster's unarmoured back, clattering against one another like some parody of a cloak. In one fist it gripped a jet-black, wickedly barbed hellsword, almost as long as Canis was tall. The rune of the Blood God burned white-hot in the centre of its horned, elongated skull.

'Wolfborn,' the thing hissed, a black, forked tongue darting from between razor-sharp teeth. 'I am Korvak Bladelord, the Red Paladin, Herald of Khorne. I have been sent to claim your skull for the throne of my master.' As it stepped into the corridor the Tzeentchian warpfire left by the banished horrors hissed and

sputtered, cringing away from the bloody aura of another god's champion.

Canis had no words for the creature. All was blood and pain and snarling, unkempt rage. He howled and lunged.

Korvak moved with the speed of a creature born from a killer's nightmare. In a flash its great hellsword was locked with Canis' right-hand wolf claws, energy snapping and crackling up the black blade's length. Canis punched the shattered remains of his left-hand claws into the thing's belly, a blow that had banished more of Korvak's daemonkin today than he cared to count. But the Herald was suddenly no longer there. Its sword was flashing downwards in a great arc, wielded as easily by the red-skinned wyrdmaster as another man would swing a short sword.

Canis dodged, but the blow still cracked off his left pauldron, splitting the ceramite. The Wolf attempted to push forward inside the daemon's guard, shoulder-first, but again Korvak was not where he had been a heartbeat before.

The air itself seemed to be vibrating, and the splitting ache in Canis' skull was getting worse. For a moment reality seemed to shimmer and shift, like a heat haze trapped in the corridor's confines.

'The warp rift is widening,' Harald's voice crackled over the vox. He was back near the grav lift, the press so tight he'd been reduced to using his shield over Glacius to snap bones and break skulls. *'They're growing more powerful. We must withdraw.'*

The words didn't register with Canis. He was hunched over, panting, face contorted by a snarl, glaring at the daemoniac Herald which now stood a half dozen paces back through the breach.

'Surrender to the rage that beats through your veins, Wolf,' Korvak hissed. *'You are no less a beast than your fallen pets.'*

Canis lunged again, and again cut only air. The stomach-turning stink of the wyrdrealm was overwhelming now, like burning copper twined around rancid meat. The air undulated, and the realisation that the walls themselves had begun to bleed pierced the fug of savagery clouding his mind. It ran in thick, red rivulets, streaking the pale plasteel and pooling underfoot. Reality itself was unravelling around him.

And suddenly Korvak was behind him. Canis tried to turn, tried to snarl his defiance and spit in the monster's face, but it felt as though he was battling through tar. The hellblade found its mark with an ease that spoke of countless millennia of warfare – parting the armour plating below his backpack as though it wasn't there at all. Searing through him like a bolt of fire, biting deep into his

spine.

The Feral Knight fell to his knees with a grunt, blood pouring from his mouth to stain his beard red. He choked. Korvak was suddenly before him again, skull trophies clattering. Duellist turned executioner, the Herald raised his sword with a small flourish, Canis' blood steaming as it ran off its scorching black surface. He tried to bring his claws up one more time, fangs bared, spitting bloody defiance.

The hellsword fell. And the wolves of Fenris howled.

The Underworld, Midgardia

The first thing Egil's boot touched was bone. There was a snap as he dropped the last few feet down the mining shaft, servos humming. He realised as he landed that he'd splintered the ribcage of a desiccated cadaver, lying directly below the machine-ladder that had led them underground.

How had it all come to this? From spearheading an armoured counter-attack out of Midgardia's Magma Gates, to crawling into the planet's underworld in search of Logan Grimnar and his Kingsguard. Egil spun, claws unsheathed, their actinic energy illuminating a small patch of blue light around him.

Nothing. His bionic eye whirred as it sought to pierce the musty darkness, auto-senses straining. Skol's inbuilt stab-lumen beamed ahead, picking out a low tunnel of heavy metal struts and hard-packed grey dirt. More fresh corpses, clad in the decaying remains of mining overalls, littered the plasboard flooring.

'Clear,' Egil breathed, stepping forward in time for Moln to drop down behind him. The big Wolf Guard landed heavily, grunting as his power armour's servos absorbed the impact.

'This looks like one of the Seven Hells,' he growled as he took in their new surroundings, making way for the next packmate to drop down from the machine-ladder.

'Things are going to get tight,' Egil allowed, stepping over to where Skol had illuminated a patch of wall near the shaft entrance. A plastek-sheathed map had been hammered into the packed earth, along with a slew of yellowing output docketts, tariff chits and work progress schedules. Egil spent a few seconds scanning it all with his bionics, blink-saving the image and analysing its markings.

'This tunnel will slope downward for just under a mile,' he said. 'At its end is a larger service intersection, twenty-nine-B. From there we can pick up one of the

highway transit routes that connect the underground hives.’

‘Where are we taking it?’ Orven, the last of the pack to drop down, asked.

‘The Great Wolf’s last recorded position,’ Egil said. ‘The uplink log had him entering Settlement Five Hundred and Twenty-Nine. The Midgardians call it Deepspark. It lies two miles to the south, and almost a mile deeper.’

‘Deeper,’ Moln growled. None of the Wolves enjoyed the claustrophobia of underworlds like Midgardia.

‘We must find Logan Grimnar,’ Egil said. ‘And as many of his Kingsguard as possible. It is inconceivable that they have all been lost.’

‘Then let’s tarry no longer,’ said Borgen Fire-eye. ‘I shall take point.’

‘With Skol,’ Egil said, a thought-impulse sending the servo-skull humming a few feet down the tunnel.

‘Keep your helmets on,’ the Iron Wolf cautioned as they set off. ‘These bodies can’t have fallen more than forty-eight hours ago, despite the stage of their decay. Even at this level the air is toxic.’

‘At least there’s a good reason to keep going down then,’ Bjorn Bloodfist growled. Low, grim laughter greeted his words, and Egil smiled briefly. Despite the ongoing fear over the Great Wolf’s whereabouts, he no longer felt the doubts that had plagued him above ground, amidst the spore jungles. His Great Company were clear of this hell, and he was doing all he could to find his lord.

Even if they all died down here, alone and forgotten, that had to count for something.

Its True Name was unpronounceable to tongues of flesh and blood, but mortals knew it as Sourgut. Phugulus was a great believer in addressing his Tallyband on a mortal-name basis, so it was Sourgut that the Herald of Nurgle called on as he gestured at the collapsed entrance of the mining outpost.

The great beast of Nurgle dragged itself through the sumptuous pox-bog to the broken timbers, and emitted a pungent belch.

‘Give him room,’ Phugulus ordered, waving his plaguebearers back from the diseased beast. The words had barely left his split lips before Sourgut heaved like some monstrous slug, the daemon’s whole body tensing and contracting. With an ugly bellow, the beast spewed a violent torrent of green-grey sludge, writhing maggots and rotting offal at the shattered entranceway of the mine.

‘Fine work, Sourgut,’ Phugulus crowed, a trio of the puffballs pockmarking his back bursting with delight. The motion set off those members of the Infested Tallyband closest to their leader, swiftly filling the Midgardian jungle air with

yet more daemonic spores. Sourgut warbled contentedly and belched again.

The acidic contents of the bloated beast's stomach worked quickly. In barely a minute it had eaten through the felled timbers blocking the entrance, burning a path into the mine. Phugulus waddled inside without hesitation. They'd need to be fast if they were going to catch up with their visitors. It really was inexplicable, just how fast the wolf-men in their metal boxes had left. Praise be to the Grandfather that at least a few had decided to stay. Why they'd chosen to go down the mine was beyond Phugulus, but he had no doubt that following them was the right thing to do. He'd heard much from his daemonkin of Midgardia's fabled underworld. It would surely struggle to match the fecund glory he and his spore clouds had brought to the surface jungles, but if he didn't see it himself he'd never know.

The interior of the outpost was empty, but the boot prints of the wolf-men in the mulch underfoot weren't difficult to follow. They all lead to a heavy-looking ladder shaft, its depths lost in darkness. As the Tallyband clustered into the mine behind him, Phugulus paused at the shaft's edge, his peeling features contorted by a grimace. Almost absentmindedly, he fumbled beneath a greasy fold and plucked a squirming nurgling from his diseased flesh. The slimy daemonic mite tried to gnaw the Herald's worm-like fingers, but his skin had long ago lost the ability to feel anything, for good or for ill.

'How deep is it?' he asked the creature. It stared at him for a second with wide, imploring eyes. Then Phugulus tossed it over the side. It squealed shrilly as it fell, its own spore-bags popping with fear. The Herald leaned forward, cocking one ear as the noise rapidly faded into the shaft's depths. There was a distant *splat*. He leaned back, grinning.

'Shallow enough! Down we go!'

Wolftide, in high orbit above Midgardia

Conran snapped his fingers at the nearest bridge huscarl and pointed at the open vision port. A swarm of spacegoing vessels filled the crystalflex glass, framed by the blotched, ugly purple orb of Midgardia.

'Hail them again,' the Wolf Guard ordered. The huscarl was no doubt thinking that they'd already tried a dozen times, but he clearly knew better than to question the filth-splattered, grim-faced Space Wolf. He bent to the vox bank, snapping commands at his scurrying kaerls.

'How long have they been here?' asked Kreg of the Ironjaws. The Long Fang

pack leader had accompanied Conran to the *Wolftide*'s bridge as soon as their Stormwolf transport had docked. In truth Conran was thankful for the white-pelt's presence. He had railed against Egil's decision to give him command of the Ironwolves not simply because he'd wished to accompany his jarl on what would surely be a saga-worthy strike into the underworld, but also because of the pressures of command. The knowledge that the fate of the entire Great Company now rested on his actions gnawed at him. That, and the Great Company's fleet, arrayed in a defensive spread around their flagship, the *Wolftide*.

The last aerial transports bearing the evacuated Ironwolves had docked with the flagship minutes before, but what was he to do next? Simply sit and wait for word from Egil, even while Sven and Harald's Great Companies fought the wyrdspawn filth on Svellgard and Frostheim? And what of Midgardia itself? He surely could not compound the shame of the Ironwolves' retreat by having them break from orbit and abandon the world? He'd already ordered the Great Company's ships to open all available holds, hangar bays and storage spaces to as many of the planet's human refugees as could still be evacuated from the Magma Gates. Now that their protectors had left them, the last human settlements would surely fall to the tide of decay sweeping the jungles. The Sky Warriors had failed their vassals.

'The system's augur sweeps report that they broke from the warp a little over six hours ago,' Conran said to Kreg, still glaring at the vessels beyond the vision port. There were dozens of them, great and small – bristling Imperial Navy capital ships, like the spires of great Ecclesiarchy cathedrals cast adrift in space, flanked by the sleek, armoured bulkheads of Adeptus Astartes Strike Cruisers and lumbering, grox-like Astra Militarum mass transporters. And in the midst of them all, the great spire-tipped planet-shard that was the Rock, the mobile, warp-capable fortress-monastery of the Dark Angels.

The sight should have thrilled any loyal servant of the Imperium. Conran felt only uncertainty warring with his rising anger. They hadn't asked for this, and his instincts told him nothing good would come of it. The presence of the Dark Angels alone was enough to make him distrustful. He spat onto the deck, warding off their evil with the old Fenrisian custom.

'We're reading activity among the crusade fleet,' called one of the kaerls manning the *Wolftide*'s cogitator tiers. 'Several of the Imperial Navy's capital ships appear to be diverting power towards their weapon systems.'

'What?'

'They're preparing to fire,' Kreg said. Even the old Long Fang sounded

incredulous.

‘At what?’ Conran snapped. ‘Triangulate their likely targeting coordinates!’

‘There’s nothing...’ the kaerl trailed off. ‘Unless they’re locking onto Midgardia itself.’

‘Vox!’ Conran barked. The huscarl at the communications bank turned to him, face grim. He shook his head.

‘The crusade fleet is still refusing to acknowledge our signal.’

‘Gunnery, all weapons live,’ Conran snarled, turning to the weapons station. ‘I don’t care if you have to drop our shields to do it in time, I want our full arsenal online right now. Vox,’ he turned back to the huscarl, ‘contact the rest of the fleet and tell them to do the same.’

‘Do you have a target designation, sire?’

‘No, just get our weapons red and make sure those bastards see them.’ He snarled at the crusade fleet, fist clenched subconsciously around the hilt of his mag-locked chainsword. ‘This is one message they won’t be able to ignore.’

The Rock, in high orbit above Midgardia

For a rare moment on the primary command bridge of the Rock, nobody knew what to do. After giving orders to the fleet to prepare firing solutions for Midgardia, Azrael had retired to the fortress-monastery’s inner chambers with Asmodai, undoubtedly to deliver final commands to his captains. Normally Vox Seneschal Mendaxis would have spoken on behalf of the Supreme Grand Master, and communicated with him directly in the event of an emergency. But when the augurs reported that the Space Wolf fleet sharing Midgardia’s orbit was suddenly powering up its weapons batteries, there was no sign of the Seneschal.

Brother-Sergeant Naamiel, commander of the bridge’s security detail and the only Space Marine present, sent a flurry of vox messages to the Captain of the Watch, but had no authority to decide whether or not to start a civil war on his own initiative. Messages from the rest of the fleet began to light up the vox banks, reports of Imperial vessels being target-locked by Space Wolf ships sending the communication pits into a flurry of panic-laced activity.

Just as it seemed someone somewhere was going to give the order to fire, Interrogator-Chaplain Elezar strode onto the bridge, skull helm glinting in the green light thrown by the cogitator screens, pict feeds and oculus vidscreens surrounding him.

‘Report,’ he said.

‘Brother-Chaplain,’ Naamiel said, bowing briefly to the grim figure. ‘Our scans show the Space Wolves have started to target elements of the crusade fleet. They are hailing us, however we are still complying with the Supreme Grand Master’s order not to make contact with them.’

‘Where is the vox seneschal?’ Elezar demanded.

‘We don’t know, Brother-Chaplain.’

Elezar seemed to survey the nearest cogitator pews for a moment, inscrutable behind his leering helm. Then he gestured curtly to Naamiel.

‘Accept their signal. Vox only.’ Naamiel hesitated for a moment before nodding.

‘Yes, Brother-Chaplain.’

Elezar strode to the nearest communications pit and accepted a brass-wired vox horn handed to him by a stooped Chapter-serf. A feral voice snarled at him over the link.

‘What are you doing, Dark Angel? Why are your blades drawn?’

‘Who am I addressing?’ Elezar replied.

‘Ironguard Conran Wulfhide, acting pack leader of the Ironwolves. I demand you power down your fleet’s weapon systems immediately, in the name of Russ and the Allfather.’

‘The Wolf has no authority over the Lion,’ Elezar said. ‘You have abandoned Midgardia. We are going to purge its surface before the situation there degenerates any further. The warp rifts deforming the planet cannot be allowed to become any more unstable.’

‘My jarl Egil Iron Wolf is still planetside,’ snapped Conran’s furious, animalistic voice. *‘As is the Great Wolf himself. I swear by every oath ever uttered, if a single one of your ships fires upon Midgardia this fleet will tear you apart.’*

‘We will not fire on you, Wolf, unless you fire on us first. But we have no evidence any of your lords yet live on Midgardia. We cannot wait any longer for them to re-establish contact.’

‘I am going to the surface.’

‘What?’

‘I am taking a Stormwolf to the surface, right now. If you fire-bomb Midgardia, you knowingly kill me, not to mention the tens of thousands of Imperial citizens still trapped there. Your vox banks will have recorded this discussion, as have ours. If you still fire on Midgardia your treachery will be known to all.’

‘Do as you wish,’ Elezar said. ‘Our duty is clear. The bombardment begins in

approximately thirty minutes, and where you are then is of no concern to us. Should your fleet fire on ours we shall respond in kind. It should be clear from our relative strengths that if you pursue such a course of action you will end up losing your fleet as well as your planet.'

The vox horn clicked. The serf who had handed it to him bowed at his feet.

'Lord, they have broken the connection.'

Elezar tossed the horn to the hunched slave and turned to Naamiel.

'Do not accept any more signals from them, or any other Wolf forces in-system. The Supreme Grand Master will return shortly.'

As it paced once more from the bridge, the Elezar-thing shuddered imperceptibly. Hidden behind its false helmet, as though mimicking the skull's leering smile, the creature known as the Changeling grinned from ear to ear.

Longhowl, Valdrmani

Longhowl possessed few survivors. When the daemons had burst into reality on Valdrmani – within the sealed interior of the moon's population domeplex – the human defence forces had been caught totally off guard. It had been murder in its purest and most unadulterated form. Men, women and children had been massacred by blade and fang, claw and warpflame, the habitation blocks running red, the screams echoing back for days off the domed roof high above. When Stern's Grey Knights and Krom Dragongaze's Fierce-eyes had finally banished the daemons back to the warp only a handful of Longhowl's former inhabitants still lived, shuddering in basements and cellar tunnels, half mad with terror and despair.

'They need to be quarantined,' Stern said. He was watching the vid feeds in Longhowl's command sanctum. Across the dozens of screens looped images of the domeplex's interior played out in grainy black and white. The daemons had left the habitation a wasteland of corpse-littered streets and buildings with walls twisted and morphed by warpfire, warm human flesh melded with cold rockcrete. Into the nightmare left in the daemons' wake, the survivors were only now slowly beginning to emerge.

'I know full well what you mean by that,' Krom said, his eyes on Stern rather than the screens. 'You will kill all of them, rather than run the risk that even one may live and bear the taint of the wyrd elsewhere.' Stern turned to Krom, meeting his gaze unflinchingly.

'You are correct.'

‘I will not assist you with murder,’ Krom said. ‘Are you going to do it all by yourself, Grey Knight?’

Stern said nothing. The situation was clear enough to both of them. There were not enough of Stern’s knights to search out and corral Longhowl’s traumatised survivors, and nor was there any time. Those who yet lived weren’t going anywhere.

‘The Stormwolves are here,’ Krom said. ‘If you want to leave this moon I suggest you and your brethren board them with me.’

‘Lord Dragongaze.’ The voice of one of Krom’s Wolf Guards interrupted him. The warrior was standing by the command sanctum’s primary vox banks. ‘The Fang is hailing us.’

‘Give it to me,’ Krom said, taking the vox horn proffered by the Wolf Guard.

‘Lord, it’s Albjorn Fogel,’ crackled a voice over the link. *‘Your vox huscarl on Winterbite told me you were at Longhowl’s command sanctum. I thought communicating there directly would ensure a better connection.’*

‘What is it?’ Krom demanded of the Fang’s chief communications officer.

‘I am receiving an urgent transmission from the Wolftide, Egil Iron Wolf’s flagship. Priority black.’

Krom felt his hair bristle at the words. Few situations were dire enough to require the Chapter’s highest encryption level.

‘Is it the Great Wolf?’ he asked.

‘I don’t know, jarl. I thought it best to patch you through direct.’

‘Do it.’

Static flooded the vox horns mounted on the communications array. A voice drifted and wove through it, as though from a great depth, tiny but insistent. There was a louder squawk of distortion, and then the voice cut into audible focus.

‘Lord, it is Conran Wulfhide, of Egil Iron Wolf’s pack. I am currently transmitting from his flagship, Wolftide.’

‘Well met, Conran,’ Krom said, making an effort to keep the urgency from his voice. ‘What news?’

‘Lord, Midgardia is lost, and with it my jarl Egil and the Great Wolf. They are both beneath the Magma Gates, cut off from all communication. Do you know of the crusade fleet that has invaded our system?’

‘I have had the huscarls in the Fang and aboard my own ships try to communicate with them for hours,’ Krom growled. ‘They refuse all contact.’

‘I spoke with one of the Lion’s sons on the Rock not twenty minutes ago. They

intend to fire-bomb Midgardia.'

'Those treacherous fools,' Krom spat. 'I knew they intended some sort of madness. Have you tried reasoning with them?'

'Yes, lord. They will not turn from their course. I have told them I am going to Midgardia myself, and if they intend to burn the surface they will burn me with it. I would rather die than abandon those still there to the flames of their own so-called protectors.'

'Do whatever you can to buy time,' Krom said. 'I cannot abandon the Hearthworld, but Captain Stern of the Grey Knights will soon be on his way. He knows of the wyrdlings behind this trickery. He will talk the Lions out of their own stupidity.'

'For the sake of us all, I hope so, lord.'

A claxon suddenly began to wail throughout the command sanctum, and augur lecterns around Krom lit up with insistent lights.

'What in the Allfather's name is that?' Krom snapped. The vox clicked. It was the *Winterbite*, overriding Conran's transmission.

'My jarl, we are detecting more ships breaking in-system. We are still triangulating the coordinates. As of yet, no identifiers.'

'World Wolf's balls,' Krom swore. 'What now?'

The Void, Fenris System Edge

Like a spear tip shattering a shield, the *Holmgang* smashed back into real space, reality buckling and splitting around it. Geysers of screaming, fang-filled light streamed from the ship's Geller field, sucked like scum down a drain as they were dragged back into the immaterium.

The battle-barge was not alone. A heartbeat after its return to reality it was joined by the Strike Cruiser, *Veregelt*. Six smaller escorts of the Chapter Fleet followed, tearing themselves free from the wyrdrealm in formation around the two capital ships.

Shields up and gunports open, the Young King had come home.

'Status,' Ragnar barked from the *Holmgang*'s command dais, gauntlets clenched as his blue eyes swept the bridge below.

'All other vessels are reporting successful re-entry,' shouted an anonymous voice from one of the vox pits. 'They are disengaging Geller fields and standing by for your orders.'

'We are being hailed by the automated system monitors,' said another of the

kaerls, manning the barge's communications array. 'They request immediate ident codes.'

'Transmit them,' Ragnar ordered.

'Augur sweeps are still triangulating,' said a senior huscarl. 'Forty-seven per cent complete.' The Wolf Lord ground his fangs together, trying not to make his need for haste any more obvious.

'Lord, we are being hailed by the astropathic beacon on Valdrmani. The transmission signature belongs to that of Lord Dragongaze.'

'Put it up on screen,' Ragnar ordered. The visual feed hanging above the centre of the bridge flickered into life, the vox horns suspended from the ceiling either side of it hissing with static.

After a moment the stern visage of Krom Dragongaze swam into view. As ever he looked every inch the Fenrisian warlord – his blue-grey battleplate edged with gilt and draped with pelts, his fiery red hair bound up in braid-knots, his bionic optic implant – the so-called 'fierce eye' itself – burning with crimson intensity. Ragnar immediately noted the blood crusting around the rent in the Wolf Lord's right shoulder plate.

'*Ragnar,*' Krom said, voice cut through by distortion.

'*Dragongaze,*' Ragnar acknowledged, inclining his head.

'*You're late.*'

'The false currents of the wyrdrealm have been confounding my Navigators for days.'

'*We need you, Young King,*' Krom said. His voice sounded heavy. '*We've had no word from Bran Redmaw or his Great Company. They must still be adrift. There is a hell-spawned plot afoot, and I fear it is far from foiled. It has already come too close to succeeding here at Longhowl.*'

'Is the Hearthworld secure?' Ragnar demanded. 'The Fang?'

'*Yes. I am returning there as soon as this transmission is finished. We do not fare so well elsewhere though. The Iron Wolves have been forced to abandon Midgardia.*'

'It is lost?'

'*Along with the Great Wolf himself. Egil has stayed behind to search for him below the Magma Gates, but we have had all communications with both broken.*'

'We will purge Midgardia,' Ragnar snarled, clutching at the wolf-tail talisman hanging from his holstered bolt pistol, 'fight our way into the underworld, and find the Old Wolf. I won't stop until every last wyrd-damned monstrosity has been banished back to their miserable hell pits.'

‘There’s more,’ Krom said, shaking his head at the young jarl. ‘Seven hours before your arrival an entire crusade fleet translated in-system. It is led by the sons of the Lion. Even the Rock is here.’

‘Damn them,’ Ragnar said. ‘Can the fools not see beyond their own petty grudges?’

‘We have identified over a dozen Chapters accompanying them,’ Krom continued. ‘And they are refusing to communicate with us. The majority of the fleet is currently taking up position in Midgardia’s orbit, though we’ve identified vessels belonging to the Ultramarines, Iron Hands and Shadow Hunters en-route for Frostheim and Svellgard. Harald and Sven’s Great Companies are still battling the wyrdling scum there.’

‘We don’t know if this fleet comes as friend or foe?’

‘I have just received a transmission from Egil’s flagship. One of his Wolf Guards claims the Dark Angels are preparing to burn Midgardia from orbit.’

‘With the Great Wolf still unaccounted for? They wouldn’t dare!’

‘There are none to stop them,’ Krom pointed out. ‘Egil is lost with the Great Wolf, Sven and Harald are fully engaged on Frostheim and Svellgard, Bran is still sailing the sea of stars. Grey Knights of the Third Brotherhood under Captain Stern are about to depart for the Rock, but I do not know if they will arrive in time, let alone whether I trust them to fully dissuade the Lions. And I cannot leave the Fang. It was one thing to travel here to the Wolf Moon, but Midgardia’s orbit has put it on the far side of the system. I cannot risk leaving the Hearthworld defenceless, not with so much wyrd trickery afoot.’

‘I will go,’ Ragnar said. ‘And I will tear the throats from anyone fool enough to attack one of our worlds. Once I have stopped them I will descend onto Midgardia and find the Old Wolf and Egil.’

‘Beware, Ragnar,’ Krom said. ‘There is foul play at work. I came to Valdrmani to assist Stern’s Knights despite my oaths. If I hadn’t, a wyrd ritual in this very domeplex’s choristorium would have convinced our allies, and maybe even the Imperium at large, that we had turned renegade. These wyrdling monsters aren’t merely attacking us. They are trying to turn us against ourselves.’

‘They won’t have to try hard if the crusade fleet fire-bombs Midgardia,’ Ragnar growled. ‘I am going there with all speed. I will see you when this is all over, Krom.’

‘Find him, Ragnar.’

‘I will, Fierce-eye,’ the Young King promised. As the screen went dead he smashed one gauntlet into the other, the crack of ceramite bringing the whole

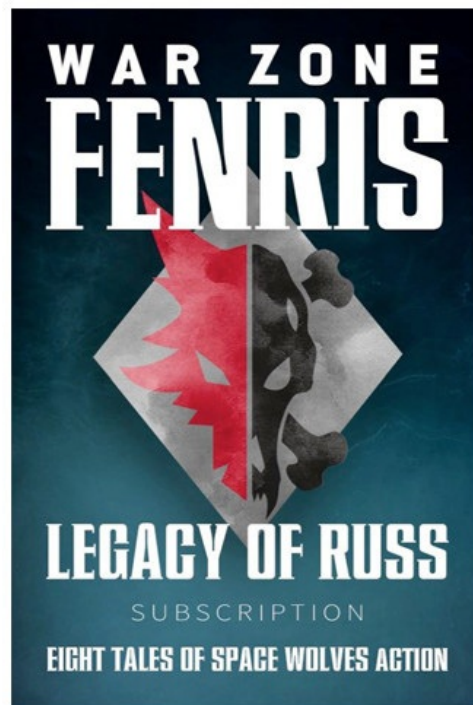
bridge to a standstill.

‘Helmsmen,’ he snarled. ‘Plot a course for Midgardia.’

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Robbie MacNiven is a highland-born History graduate from the University of Edinburgh. His hobbies include reenacting, football and obsessing over Warhammer 40,000. He has written the Deathwatch short story 'Redblade', and the Warhammer 40,000 stories 'A Song for the Lost' and 'Blood and Iron' for Black Library.

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