

WARHAMMER
40,000



WAR ZONE
FENRIS



LEGACY OF RUSS 5

INFURNAGE

ROBBIE MACNIVEN

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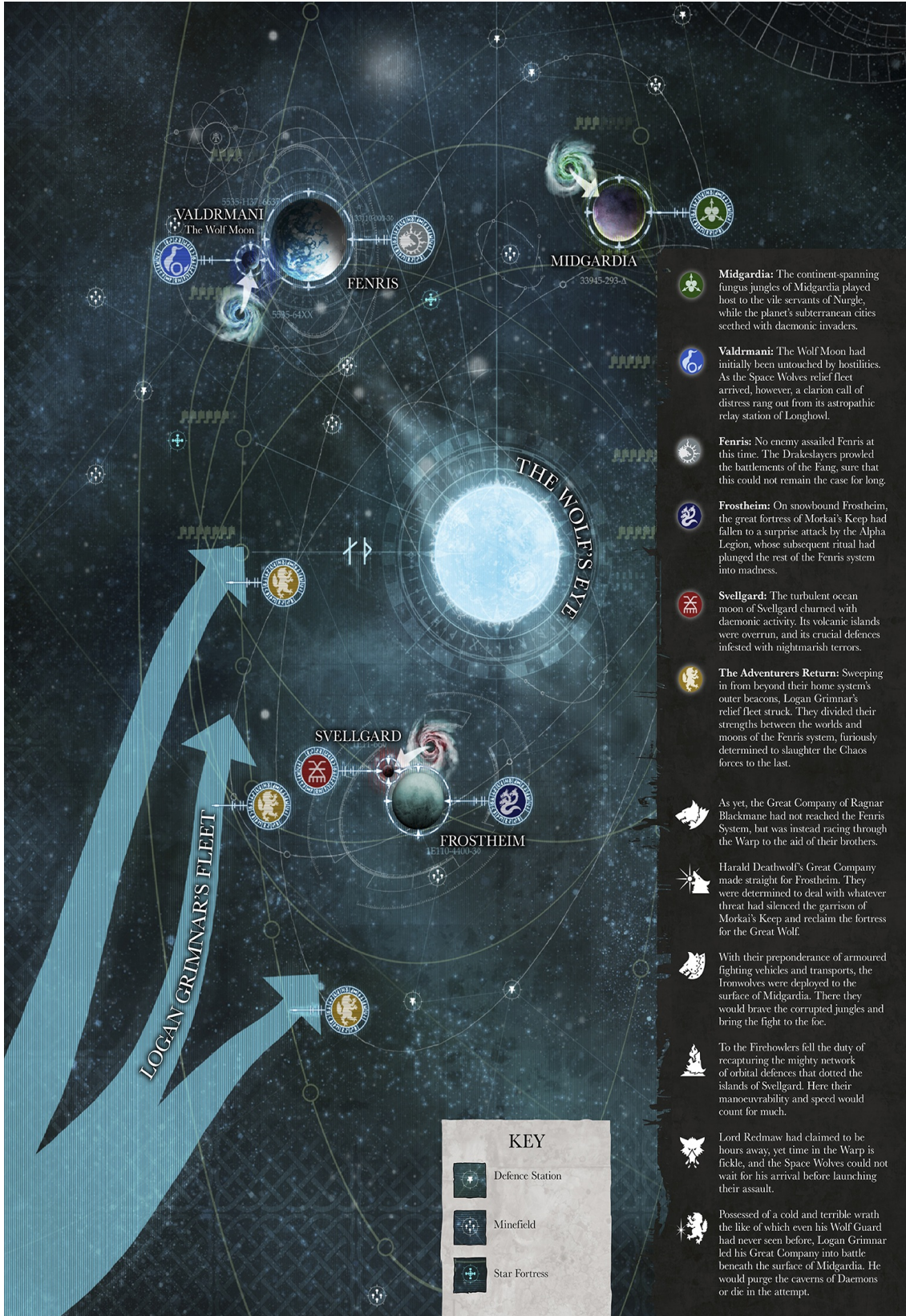
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LOGAN GRIMMAR'S FLEET

VALDRMANI
The Wolf Moon

FENRIS

MIDGARDIA

THE WOLF'S EYE

SVELLGARD

FROSTHEIM

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.

INFURNACE

Robbie MacNiven

Ramilies-class star fort, designate Gormenjarl

They had been Wolves once. Grey Hunters, experienced warriors, their pelts flecked with silver and their armour etched with runes that told of great and bloody sagas. But they were Wolves no more. The things that came at Brother-Captain Stern and his Grey Knights down the flesh-corridors of *Gormenjarl's* primary docking spine wore only a semblance of their old selves, a mocking half-facsimile. Blue-grey battleplate was now bent and twisted around fleshy growths and scarred with the runes of an altogether darker tongue.

The transhuman physique of the Space Marines had been similarly bent, changed to better suit the purposes of the insane things that now wore the Wolves' flesh. Arms ended in bony claw-growths, snapping maws or spine-rimmed tentacles. Vox grilles had become slavering jaws, and visor lenses blinked with raw eyelids. Lower limbs were double-jointed or cloven-hoofed. One beast's bare arms were covered in a million tiny chitin spines that gave the appearance of a bony fur pelt, while another had atrophied, leathery pinions sprouting grotesquely from the seal of its backpack.

They had once been the Redpelts, *Gormenjarl's* Space Wolf garrison. Now they were monsters, possessed by the daemons that infested the star fort, their bodies broken and abused, refashioned with no heed to nature's constraints.

And they came straight for the Grey Knights, slavering, snapping and howling. 'Stand firm, brethren,' Stern shouted, raising his nemesis force sword. 'Suffer not the unclean to live!'

The two sides, silver paladins and possessed warp-wolves, met with a crash of ceramite and snapping bone. The foremost daemon, a thing with a red-pelted wolf's head and crab-claw arms, went straight for Stern. The Grey Knight

captain met it with a downward slash of his force sword, silvered steel cleaving through warped plate to hack off one of the monstrosity's snapping limbs. The thing didn't even flinch, latching the other claw around Stern's right fist. The vice-like grip sheared cleanly through his wrist-mounted storm bolter and bit through his vambrace, drawing blood. Stern grunted and lunged forward, driving his blade into the creature's abdomen. The combatants locked. Even after running it through, the possessed Wolf still fought, lupine jaws distending with unnatural ease as they snapped and slavered at Stern's helm.

Stern spat strings of words from the Rites of Exorcism, channelling the holy willpower of his collected Brotherhood into his blade's psyker-sensitive steel. The stab of energy was infinitely more potent than the physical edge, tearing deep into the daemon wearing the Space Wolf's flesh. Like shadows ripped apart by a sudden flood of light, the warp creature was banished back to the immaterium. The defiled body of the Wolf slumped against Stern, dead, infected blood pattering down the daemonhunter's silver armour. Stern pushed the body off, commending its lost soul to the Emperor.

Around him, his brothers fought for their lives. They had been trained almost from birth to destroy warpspawn. From their blades – adamantium-tipped, forged from blessed silver and blessed by holy water – to their aegis armour – inscribed with catechisms of hatred and wards of faith, and anointed with sacred oils – every inch of their being was repellent to the creatures that scuttled and crawled in the darkest corners of mankind's imagination.

But the things they fought now were not purely daemonic. They were an unholy melding, a dark union between the physical and that which should only have existed in nightmares. The flesh of the possessed Wolves did not cringe from purifying silver, and it did not vanish back to the warp when pierced by righteous steel. The speed, strength and savagery of the Space Wolves, itself a match for the battle skill of Stern's brethren, had been augmented a hundredfold by the dark cunning and unholy vigour of the things that had come from the warp.

The Grey Knights struggled to match them. Force weapons clashed with chitin and twisted steel, and claws raked at silver power armour. One of the possessed had locked multiple jaws around Brother Lucan's gorget, tearing open the ceramite with unnatural ease and gorging itself on the flesh of the Space Marine's throat. Brother Wilfred slammed his force glaive into the creature's scaled flank, bellowing in High Gothic. Still it hung on. Lucan was on his knees, blood jetting from the savage wound. Wilfred rammed his storm bolter into the

side of the thing's skull and fired, disintegrating it with a blast of hexagrammically inscribed bolts. Beside him Brother Tomaz had wreathed another of the former Space Wolves in the white flames of his incinerator.

The thing howled, the sound more like four voices than one, all shrieking together. Even as the flesh melted from its deformed bones it came on, clutching Tomaz in a fiery embrace. The Grey Knight kicked the charred remains away in time to take a blow from another possessed Wolf's hammer-like bony appendage. The impact dented his helmet and slammed him back into the fleshy walls of the docking spine.

Stern parried the chainsword of another possessed. The weapon had melded with the Space Wolf's arm, black ichor now oiling the spinning saw-teeth. Stern's sword locked with it, the tendon-rotor screaming, the teeth jammed as they tried to chew through the blessed steel. The possessed thrust forward, using its unnatural strength to drive Stern back, vox grille snapping with freshly sprouted fangs.

'Brother-captain!' Alacar bellowed from behind Stern. 'Down!'

The Grey Knight reacted without thinking, going on one knee with his sword still locked. He felt the weight of Alacar's charged force hammer swing overhead. The crackling weapon struck the possessed squarely in the face, pulverising its horned skull and slamming the body back down the corridor with a concussive blast of released energy.

There was no time for thanks. Stern turned his rise into a lunge that impaled the two-headed horror leaping at him. More daemons were attacking in the wake of the possessed. A back-cut cleaved apart another of the Tzeentch horrors in a blaze of multi-coloured light. A hellsword caught him in the thigh plate, scoring a shallow wound above his cuisse's seal. A second hacked deep into his right pauldron, scarring the book-and-sword sigil of his Chapter. Stern parried another blow, his sword a silver blur as he kept two hissing bloodletters at bay.

'*We're losing ground,*' Gideon shouted over the vox, moments before a hellsword punched into his gut.

'Tomaz, ignition pattern,' Stern snapped, throwing Gideon back with a thrust of his pauldron. 'Scourge formation. Slowly.'

Tomaz adopted a braced stance and unleashed his flamer in a wide arc, covering the corridor from one side to the other. The walls themselves shuddered and writhed beneath the purifying heat. The warp-wolves howled and shrieked as their flesh ignited, while the flames licked harmlessly across the armour of Stern's paladins. As one the Grey Knights stepped back, heeding their brother-

captain's orders to disengage. Artemis, Alacar and Wilfred snatched the fallen bodies of Lucan and Gideon as they went, the remaining six knights closing protectively around them.

Tomaz's flames didn't check the possessed for long. If anything, it only drove the daemons into a greater frenzy. They tore through the docking spine, bodies still wreathed in fire. The Grey Knights opened up at point-blank range, hammering them with mass-reactive bolts.

'Report?' Stern snapped into the vox.

'*A few moments more, lord,*' came the strained voice of *Star Drake's* huscarl.

'You don't have them,' Stern said, parrying the raking claws of a burning, bolt-riddled possessed with a sucking maw for a head. 'Open the blast doors.'

Pace by pace the Grey Knights continued to retreat. When the warpspawn pressed too close, the supportive fire of Wilfred, Alacar and Artemis from the rear ranks cut them down, while Stern, Osbeth, Simeon, Caldor, Tomaz, Ethold and Latimer hacked, slashed and stabbed unceasingly at the frothing, snarling tide. Behind him, Stern heard the grate of the docking blast doors rolling open.

'Tomaz, burn them again,' he ordered. The fact that the possessed were still clawing at them showed how powerful the warp rift at *Gormenjarl's* heart was. They had to close it, and there was only one way to achieve that now.

'*My last canister,*' Tomaz voxed, before stepping up once more. The roar of holy flames and the shriek of warpspawn filled the corridor once again. The Grey Knights used the precious few seconds to turn, dragging their wounded back into the *Star Drake*.

'Hold them here,' Stern ordered as he reached the doors. 'We can give the crew a few moments more.'

As Tomaz backed through the opening, jettling the remains of his incinerator's promethium canister after him, the other nine Knights halted at the blast doors and unleashed a hail of silver-tipped storm bolter rounds. The corridor immediately in front of the door disintegrated in a hail of torn, burning flesh and detonating shells.

'*We've done all we can, lord,*' the huscarl's voice crackled in Stern's ear.

'Disengage from the docking spine,' Stern ordered. 'Now.' He slammed the sealing rune next to the blast doors. The heavy adamantium juddered shut just as Tomaz stepped inside, his incinerator sputtering a few last drops of liquid fire. Moments later there came the hammering and shrieking of things on the other side, furiously attempting to claw their way inside the *Star Drake*.

'Caldor, Osbeth, take Lucas and Gideon to the medicae bay,' Stern ordered.

‘Everyone else remain here, overwatch pattern. Ensure there is no breach. I am going to the bridge.’ There was a thump and a moan of metal as the Grey Knight spoke, and the sounds of pounding from the far side of the blast doors trailed off.

‘We’re retreating?’ Ethold called after Stern as he strode towards the docking bay’s grav lift. The big paladin was slicked with dripping, stinking ichor, fists locked around the haft of his force glaive. Stern didn’t look back.

‘No.’

The *Star Drake*’s bridge was a hive of activity. The huscarl Stern had given temporary command to was standing atop the command dais, snapping orders to his kaerls. In the open vision ports Stern saw *Gormenjarl* hovering into view as the ship detached itself from the docking spine and swung about to face it.

‘Were repairs completed?’ Stern asked as he strode onto the bridge. The huscarl bowed hastily.

‘We still cannot route full power to the plasma drives for fear of overloading them, lord, but to all intents and purposes, yes. The coolant coupling was eighty-five per cent complete when we detached. We should make far better time now. Do you have a heading?’

‘Not yet,’ Stern said. ‘Reroute power to the forward bombardment cannon. Lock onto the star fort, I don’t care where. Just hit it.’

‘Affirmative, lord,’ said the huscarl, before barking orders to the gunnery station. Deep in the *Star Drake*’s bowels whips cracked and chain gangs heaved in the hellish half-light as they dragged a vast bombardment shell into the breach of the Strike Cruiser’s primary cannon. The ship’s machine-spirit, manifest in the probing of its sensory arrays and augur masts, easily acquired the huge target presented by *Gormenjarl*.

‘Bombardment cannon loaded and locked, lord,’ a gunnery kaerl called.

‘Fire,’ Stern said.

Swallowed by the void, there was no sound of any discharge, but the flash of the mighty weapon reflected back from the fort’s gleaming bulkheads, and the tremor of its recoil reached the bridge’s decking plates. Seconds passed. Then part of the star fort’s gaping docking space blossomed outwards, eerily silent, the armour plating blown apart by the point-blank shot and spinning away with a curiously majestic slowness.

‘You were right, Brother Artemis,’ Stern said, smiling grimly. ‘*Gormenjarl*’s shields no longer function.’

He turned to the gunnery station. ‘Huscarl, direct all firepower at the structural weak points. I want to have dealt it crippling damage within the hour. And have

your communications pit patch me through to the Fang immediately.’

The Fang, Fenris

Lord Krom Dragongaze’s footsteps led him into darkness.

A part of him knew he should not venture into the Vaults. It was a cursed place, an icy shaft buried deep into the roots of the mountain. A place of cracked, worn statues and sealed doors, their mechanisms frozen solid with ice. The power had long ago failed, and even the great geothermal reactor coils that helped keep the Fenrisian death-chill from the Fang’s corridors had never reached this deep. This was beyond the Underfang and the Halls of the Revered Fallen, a place marked on few maps, and remembered in even fewer living memories.

Krom trod the rock-carved corridors with care, the active hum of his power armour painfully loud in the stony depths. He held a lumen orb in one hand, its pale light picking out the graven alcoves and craggy stairways before him. In a place like this, even the Fierce-eye didn’t want to trust to his senses alone.

He passed three ward-doors before he reached the chamber he sought. He had to search the depths of his long memory to conjure up the correct pass-codes, and he felt the static buzz of hexagrammic wards and power shields as he passed through each one. Beyond the last lay a great, vaulted room. Krom’s orb failed to even pick out its ceiling. The stony glare of a hundred forgotten Wolf Guard stared down at Dragongaze from their plinths lining the chamber’s walls, while row after row of metal caskets filled its open floor.

Krom glanced at his visor display, but it told him little. The vox, the chrono counter and his tracking signal had all failed him. He could have passed into another dimension as far as his auto-senses were concerned. All he had was a temperature reading well below freezing, his spiking vital signs, and targeting reticules continually flashing a warning red as they picked up the false outlines of the ancient statues. He deactivated them with a blink, trying to ease his jagged heartrate.

‘Why are you here,’ he growled to himself. Even though he hadn’t vocalised it beyond his helmet, the words seemed to echo about in the frozen, lost chamber. There was no reply, but he knew the answer anyway. He could not sit and wait in the great halls of the Fang while the rest of his Chapter fought and bled across the other home worlds of the Fenris System. He had to try to learn the truth. Perhaps, down here, there would be an insight into the curse that plagued them.

The casket he was seeking was the nearest to the ward-door. It was the last one

to have been brought to the haunted depths, laid to rest less than four centuries earlier. Krom approached it, his lumen orb flickering, as though reluctant to go any further. The casket was large – steel bound in brass and big enough to hold Snegga the Giant, the broadest warrior in Krom's Great Company. Its flanks were inscribed with ancient, intricate runic script while a carving of the World Wolf was inlaid on its lid. Krom brushed his fingers against it, and felt the throbbing power of an active stasis field within.

The Wolf Lord set his orb down beside the casket and unlocked the gauntlet from his left hand, laying it beside the orb. Then he drew his combat knife, and nicked the razor steel against the back of his hand. A single line of blood ran down his forefinger. He held it against the gene-lock panel set into the casket's flank. There was a whir as the mechanism matched and confirmed the genetic heritage of the sons of Russ. Then there came a thud of bolts, and a hiss of pressure sealant as the casket's heavy lid slid slowly back on auto-hinges. Krom kept his combat knife out.

At first, with the lumen orb still on the ground next to it, the casket's interior was just a well of power-charged darkness. Krom's auto-senses were stripping the shadows away when a single small lumen in the casket's top blinked on. What it revealed inside was a horror.

The Great Wolf had saved it four centuries earlier, on the frigid world of Lumerius. The vile traitors of the Black Legion, led by the insane butcher Fabius Bile, had been hunting for it, desperate to seize its genetic material and fashion an army of nightmares to augment their dark strength. Grimnar and the Champions of Fenris had gotten there first, putting the traitors to the sword and rescuing the casket. It had been taken here, to the deepest vaults of the Fang, and here it had lain undisturbed ever since, sleeping the ages away in the frozen darkness. Fang-brother, the Lost, Herald of Russ. *Wulfen*.

The creature had been locked in the casket's inbuilt stasis field, its claws out, features twisted in an eternal, bestial snarl. Krom bent forward to look into its eyes, seeking something more than animal hunger in them. As his shadow fell across the Wulfen he got the distinct sense that the thing was looking back at him, aware, every muscle silently straining against its enforced paralysis. The Wolf Lord straightened hastily.

It was not a Space Wolf. Perhaps it had been once, but the heraldry of its ancient power armour belonged to the Wolf Brothers. Theirs was a tragic tale. The only Successor Chapter ever founded by the VI Legion, the genetic legacy of Russ had proven to be too volatile to be replicated beyond Fenris. According

to half-remembered, half-believed legend, the Wolf Brothers had been riven by the curse of the Wulfen. Those not killed had been scattered by the tides amidst the Sea of Stars. The few that still survived were hunted, whether by a misguided Imperium, or darker powers.

Grimnar had gotten to this one just before the forces of Chaos had latched their claws around it. The thought of the warped geneticist Bile capturing a Wulfen for his experiments was a terrible one. Looking down at the stasis-frozen body of the feral creature, Krom sought reason in its form. Legend held that the Wulfen's return presaged that of the primarch himself. Certainly the old Wolf Priest Ulrik had thought as much. Others had been less certain.

It had long been feared that evidence of the instability of the Canis Helix within the genetic code of the Space Wolves could be used by other Imperial factions to damn the Chapter. Now just such a scenario was playing out, with the Lions occupying the system. What had brought the Wulfen back? Had they returned to combat the daemons infesting the system, or were they in fact a part of the Dark Gods' schemes, unwitting pawns in a plot to annihilate the Rout once and for all?

'*Lord,*' said Vox Huscarl Fogel, transmitting from the Fang's communications hub. Krom started, taking a step back from the casket. His vox had re-established a connection. Sudden anger flushed through him. What had he hoped to achieve by coming down here? There could be no insight into the curse. The Wulfen were animals, pure and simple.

'Speak,' he ordered Fogel.

'*Lord, Captain Stern is on the long-range vox. He has urgent news.*'

'I'm on my way.'

He looked down one more time into the Wolf Brother's eyes. They glared back at him. He wondered for a moment whether, in truth, his own gaze was any less unsettling. Then he hit the sealant rune, and watched the casket's heavy lid lock back into place. The thud of the internal clamps echoed through the chamber. Krom refastened his gauntlet, picked up the lumen orb, and left.

The Fang's primary communications array was hushed when the Wolf Lord arrived. He was handed a vox horn and receiver by Fogel.

'Stern,' Krom said into the horn. 'Report. What's happened?'

'*Grim tidings,*' the Grey Knight replied. '*I am aboard the star fort Gormenjarl. We have recently discovered a full-scale daemoniac infestation. My brethren and I are too few to purge it, so we are currently bombarding the fort from afar. The infestation has disabled the structure's weaponry and shield capabilities.*'

‘Has Shipmaster Ranulf consented to this?’ Krom demanded.

‘No,’ said Stern. ‘*That was the second matter that needed to be discussed. Your shipmaster has succumbed to your genetic... curse. I’ve had to confine him to his own ship’s brig. His two crewmates also turned, at the same time. We had no choice but to slay them.*’

Days earlier news that the Grey Knights had killed his brethren – Wulfen or not – would have sent spikes of rage stabbing through Krom’s thoughts. Now though, he felt nothing. He had fought tooth and nail alongside Stern’s silver paladins, saved the soul of his Chapter with their help. The blank, feral glare of the Wolf Brother had held nothing of the *Vlka Fenryka*’s martial upbringing and nobility, only its darker, more bestial side.

‘We need more men,’ Krom said. ‘If what you say is true, Stern, then we must ensure control of *Gormenjarl*’s twin, *Mjalnar*. We cannot afford to leave it infested with wyrdlings.’

‘Aren’t all forces engaged, besides your own?’

‘Not all,’ Krom said. ‘Not quite.’

The Void, Fenris System

‘Do you trust him?’

Ragnar sneered. ‘I’d as soon trust one of the wyrdlings. He’s a member of the ordos. He exists to persecute and lie. Have you ever heard of one of his breed who didn’t despise our Chapter, and all because we strive to protect mankind? Because we dare to honour the reason for our very existence?’

Olvec the Wise, Ragnar’s Wolf Guard Battle Leader, nodded. ‘He seemed open enough with his motives though. If his tale was true, he despises the Lions. He would use us as a weapon against them.’

‘And well he may, if they burn Midgardia. If they want a war, they’ll have one.’

The two Wolves were conferring privately in *Holmgang*’s shrine to Morkai. The place of worship, like much of the ship, recalled the Chapter’s primal roots – though the decks and ceiling were plasteel plate and iron mesh, the walls were clad in rugged, dark grey stone, mined from the flanks of Asaheim. The lumen strips, running down the length of the room’s edges, were dimmer in this less-visited part of the ship, with much of the power rerouted to the plasma drives. They threw long shadows over the pelt-heaped stone altar, and cast the features of the two Wolves into jagged contrast. Ragnar’s eyes gleamed coldly.

‘Do you believe the inquisitor’s tale,’ Olvec asked, ‘about Interrogator-

Chaplain Asmodai?’

‘There are many such stories about the sons of the Lion,’ Ragnar said. ‘They are a dark brotherhood. It is little surprise that they should clash with the ordos. And now the ordos have come to us. Clearly this de Mornay knows the value of his enemy’s enemy.’

‘He was a warrior once,’ Olvec said. ‘He has the bearing still, despite his age. I smell blood and steel about him.’

‘That is at least to be commended,’ Ragnar allowed. ‘Regardless of whether he intends to use us or not, any who wield a blade in the Allfather’s name are useful at a time like this.’

‘We are beset,’ Olvec agreed. ‘And the packs are hungrier than ever. Wyrdspawn or the Lions, whoever we next bare our claws against will suffer.’

The *Holmgang*’s intercom command channel clicked in Ragnar’s ear. Olvec watched as his jarl received the vox huscarl’s message.

‘To the bridge,’ he said after breaking the link.

‘Trouble?’

‘Dragongaze is hailing us again. Perhaps he’s grown bored, sitting alone in the Fang.’

The half-jest fell flat. They hurried to the command deck. Krom greeted them from the static-washed display of its main vid feed.

‘*It’s the Grey Knights,*’ he said.

‘What of them?’

‘*Captain Stern has just sent me a transmission. Our Ramilies star fort, Gormenjarl, has been infested by wyrdlings. His Brotherhood is too few to purge it, so he’s destroying it from afar with one of my ships. We believe Mjalnar may also have been overrun.*’

‘Have you hailed *Mjalnar*?’ Ragnar asked.

‘*There’s been no contact made with it since the incursions began,*’ Krom said. ‘*I fear the daemonhunter is correct, and if he is we cannot afford to leave a mobile warp rift open in the heart of the system.*’

‘My fleet is the nearest to *Mjalnar*’s current location,’ Ragnar said, glancing at one of the bridge’s glowing holocharts. ‘But it would delay our arrival at Midgardia.’

‘*We have no choice, Blackmane,*’ Krom said. ‘*There is still no word from Bran Redmaw, and all our other forces are fully engaged. You alone can meet this threat.*’

Ragnar grimaced, but nodded. ‘Very well, Fierce-eyes. My packs will purge

Mjalnar. Pray to the Allfather its communications have simply failed, and our brethren yet garrison it.'

'I shall,' Krom said. *'But there is other news from Stern. He discovered Gormenjarl's plight after he went there seeking repairs. Apparently Shipmaster Ranulf, of the Star Drake, succumbed to the curse along with two others. They damaged the ship before they could be stopped.'*

'Are you telling me not to trust my own Wulfen?'

'I'm telling you to be mindful of those who have not yet turned, Young King,' Krom said. *'Whether we accept them into our ranks afterwards or not, having experienced warriors devolving into half-beasts only weakens us.'*

'I have more than just the curse to be mindful of, Dragongaze,' Ragnar said. 'Have you heard of a Hereticus inquisitor by the name of Banist de Mornay?'

'I have not, why?'

'His ship has joined my fleet en-route to Midgardia. He seeks to enlist my help in bringing the Lions to heel.'

'The last thing we need now is the Inquisition's meddling,' Krom growled.

'He claims to believe our Wulfen are free of warp taint. That could make him a valuable ally.'

'Or he could turn on us as soon as he's used us to settle whatever grudge he has with the Dark Angels,' Krom said. *'Tread carefully, Blackmane.'*

'Don't I always, Dragongaze?' Ragnar smiled grimly. Krom didn't respond. The transmission ended.

'Get me the inquisitor's ship,' Ragnar ordered his vox huscarl. 'Tell him I am changing course.'

Svellgard

Wrath had arrived. It burst into existence in the depths of Svellgard's oceans, tearing itself free of one of the warp rifts that had pierced the moon's seabed. For the first time since creation, it brought light to the icy deeps. It burned white-hot, the fury of its god made manifest. Blood and screams and war-steel had drawn it here, a memory of the fury of Wolves, and now it would do its god's bidding.

The waters around it began to churn and boil. Already billions of gallons from Svellgard's seas had plummeted through the warp rifts and into the madness of the immaterium. The islands that housed the Claws of the World Wolf were growing steadily larger, the waters receding from the shores and exposing fresh, jutting rocks, gleaming like bone spiking out from desiccated corpses. Through

the flushing tides the monstrosity known as Infurnace blazed. Ahead of it lay the World Wolf's Lair, and a fight worthy of the Blood God.

The Void, Fenris System

Mjalnar was transmitting. It was not, however, an intelligible signal. The Wolf fleet circled the unresponsive Imperial star fort like a pack sniffing at a frozen corpse, hackles up and fangs bared, wary.

'Boost the audio,' Ragnar ordered from *Holmgang's* bridge throne, leaning towards the vox array. The noises emitting from *Mjalnar* came through more clearly. Except they were not really noises at all. The Wolf Lord was reminded of being plunged underwater, and having crushing pressure reduce everything to a sort of constant, muted rumble. It set his hairs on end and sent a strange, icy chill creeping along his shoulders.

'Cut the link,' he said. 'And pull alongside. I want to board immediately.'

Mjalnar filled *Holmgang's* viewing ports, a mountain of silent adamantium threat. Transmission lights and guidance beacons still winked from its crenelated masts and spires, and the star fort's great guns had been run out. Of actual life, however, there was no sign.

'Lord, Inquisitor de Mornay is hailing us,' a vox kaerl said.

'Speakers,' Ragnar ordered.

'*What happened to our need for haste?*' de Mornay demanded.

'There are some duties even the Inquisition cannot countermand,' Ragnar replied. '*Mjalnar* is a mighty battlestation. If it has fallen, it must be retaken. If it is overrun, it must be destroyed.'

'*Every second we delay, Midgardia burns,*' de Mornay said.

'Do you think I don't realise that?' Ragnar snarled. 'Do you think I don't ache to close my fist around the throats of those threatening my Chapter's worlds? My Wolves have waited too long to pass this kill by. If you wish to face the Lions alone then by all means, carry on to Midgardia. But my packs are my own, and we are boarding *Mjalnar*. Are you still with us, *inquisitor?*'

There was a long pause. Ragnar sneered. Then the reply crackled over the vox, heavy with finality.

'I will see you onboard the star fort, Lord Blackmane.'

The World Wolf's Lair, Svellgard

The seas were retreating. Sven watched them rather than the Thunderhawks and

Stormwolves of Harald's Great Company as they landed amongst the bunkers, bastions and turrets of the World Wolf's Lair. He had already transmitted data links pinpointing where his lines were weakest. Harald's warriors would fill the gaps accordingly, Firehowlers and Deathwolves manning the parapets and fire slits side by side. But the joy such a gathering of Wolves would normally have brought Sven was eclipsed by the mystery of Svellgard's receding seas.

'The wyrdling rifts must be widening,' Olaf Blackstone said, pointing at the expanse of sodden wet sand that now stretched away from the Lair's shingle. 'The water is disappearing into the immaterium.'

'At least we'll see the bastards coming,' Sven growled. He pointed to a patch of ocean further out, a choppy channel that ran between two of the Lair's neighbouring islands. It looked as though a bank of fog or steam was rising from the waves, creating a swirling cloud on the near horizon. 'And what about that?'

'Russ only knows,' Olaf replied. 'Send the *Godspear*?'

'Agreed. Have the area scanned. We've enjoyed enough wyrd-damned surprises.'

'Affirmative.'

'*Lord, I'm getting movement,*' said Yngfor the Long Fang over the vox. 'Contacts coming ashore from the south.' Sven opened a channel to Harald.

'Are your packs in position, Deathwolf?'

'*They are, Bloodhowl. Let the wyrdlings come.*'

'We'll make them regret the day they sought to claim Svellgard,' Sven said, switching to the company-wide channel.

'All packs, fire at will.'

Boarding Torpedo Fifteen-B, approaching Mjalnar

Ragnar flexed his arms and shoulders. He felt the servo bundles that gave life to his power armour whir in response to the motion, while the true flesh and muscle of his transhuman physique stretched. He had been trapped in the voidborne prison of his flagship for too long. The hunt called to him. He could already feel the wyrdling scum snapping in his grasp, shrieking as he sent them back to the empyrean. He realised his gauntlets were clenched, and let out a long, slow breath. The chrono display counting down in his visor's top-right corner still read over a minute before the boarding torpedo impacted into the star fort's flank.

He finished recounting the names of his dead pack-brothers. It was a ritual he

had observed for a long time, and he knew it gave comfort to his Great Company as well as to himself. To know their jarl valued their lives, counted them as true kin whether amidst the fires of battle or the feasting halls of the Fang, hardened the bonds of pack loyalty. The Blackmanes were all as one.

He drew *Frostfang*. The ancient chainsword felt like an extension of his physical form, his fist closing with familiar certainty around the worn handle. His fingers itched to flick the activation stud. Hidden beneath his helmet's faceplate, he grinned.

'You're grinning, aren't you?' said Tor Wolfheart.

'And you're not?' Ragnar replied. 'I have ached for this, brother. At last we will join the other Great Companies in the defence of our home worlds.'

Twenty seconds. He knew he needed to say nothing to the Blackpelts, his Wolf Guard. They understood what was coming. Like the Allfather's burning warspear, they would plough into the diseased heart of wyrdspawn infestation, banishing it from the material universe, utterly wiping away the taint of their existence.

Five seconds. The boarding torpedo shuddered as it impacted into *Mjalnar's* flank, latching on with razor limpet clamps. There was a muffled *whoosh* of heavy meltaguns, followed by the thud and whir of disengaging locks. The pod's assault bay was bathed in bloody red light. Ragnar released his restraint, feeling his adrenaline spiking, breath coming in pants through his armour's filtration systems.

The blast doors opened, revealing a circular hole that dripped with molten steel, the edges still glowing from the melta blasts. Ragnar triggered *Frostfang*, his vox-amplified howl blending with the chainsword's savage roar. He leapt through the boarding hatch, fangs bared. Straight into a deserted service corridor.

And not a daemon in sight.

The World Wolf's Lair, Svellgard

This time, the creatures of Chaos assaulting Svellgard's beaches struggled. With the addition of Harald's packs to Sven's defences, the weight of firepower had doubled. The receding tides had left the dark cohorts with more open ground to cross before they could reach the outermost defences of the Lair. Squealing and roaring wyrdlings were cut to pieces even as they dragged themselves, dripping, from the icy waves. The Earthshaker artillery added their firepower from the nearby islands, their strikes sending up great plumes of water and brine as they

shelled the gradually expanding southern edge of the Lair. Fifteen minutes into the assault Sven's biggest concern, watching from the ramparts of the Lair's central keep, was monitoring ammunition expenditure.

That all changed with a message from *Godspear*.

'*The island channel is experiencing a huge temperature spike,*' the pilot voxed. '*Something in the water is giving off an energy signature. And it's moving towards the Lair.*'

'What fresh maleficarum is this?' Sven growled. 'Keep tracking it.'

'*Lord, it seems to be rising to the surface. I-*' the pilot got no further. The water beneath the vapour fog heaved. Something vast powered from the sea and into the steam-wreathed air. Great, bat-like pinions unfurled, and black coal-flesh that smouldered with hate-fuelled heat burst into white flames.

With a roar that shook the rockcrete beneath Sven's mag-boots, a burning Bloodthirster lunged upwards at *Godspear*.

Sven could only listen to the pilot's startled, frantic oaths as he tried to evade the Greater Daemon. He watched the Thunderhawk bank desperately, but the fire-wreathed monstrosity was infinitely lither in the air. The huge axe it wielded inscribed a fiery arc through Svellgard's grey sky, and smashed into one of the *Godspear*'s wings. The single blow cut clean through its armour plating, throwing out a spray of fat sparks. The gunship immediately lurched to one side, its servitor-controlled bolters blasting wildly into the air in all directions. It started to spin out of control amidst a plume of fire and black smoke.

'Infurnace,' Sven breathed. He recognised the Greater Daemon. All the Wolves did. Its crude, fiery likeness could be found carved across the saga knotwork in four of the great halls of the Fang, recounting the epic battle between it and the Wolf Lord Kjarl Stormpelt, many millennia past. Infurnace was a tale every Blood Claw knew, one of the near-mythical monsters that reared its head from the depths of the Chapter's glorious past. And now it had returned, to help write new sagas with fresh blood.

The Greater Daemon had only just begun. It lashed out with a chain-whip grasped in its other fist, the heavy, white-hot links snagging the damaged Thunderhawk's remaining wing. With a roar like a forgesmith's hammerstrike, it twisted its mighty body in mid-air, directing the *Godspear*'s erratic plunge towards the shoreline of the closest island.

Sven made out the tiny figures of Astra Militarum troopers vainly attempting to scatter as the Thunderhawk's burning shadow screamed over them. The Bloodthirster's chain snapped free, and the *Godspear*'s wrecked remains

hammered into the island shingle. It ploughed a deep furrow in the shore, obliterating a section of makeshift flakboard barricades and wiping the platoon manning them from existence. Then the gunship exploded, a blossoming fireball that blazed across the island's beach, as though in sympathy with the fiery monster that had caused it. The blast took more troopers with it, demolishing the western side of the island's defences.

Infurnace didn't even pause to survey its handiwork. Wings beating, it launched itself through the air, straight towards the World Wolf's Lair.

Ramilies-class star fort, designate Mjalnar

Ragnar and his Blackpelts stood just beyond the hatch of their boarding torpedo, weapons drawn. Nothing moved to oppose them. The service corridor was old, and quite clearly deserted. The ceiling was a mass of bared coolant piping, and the walls were naked plasteel, inset with cobwebbed lumen orbs. Rust discoloured every surface, and there was a distant hissing where steam escaped from a ruptured pipe. Although the corridor was clearly timeworn and abandoned, there was no wyrdling stench about it.

'Morkai's heads,' Ragnar spat, feeling his system flush with rage. 'Where are they?'

No one answered. The old lumen orbs flickered once, but remained mute.

'Maybe the star fort is free from taint,' Uller Greylock growled. 'Maybe the Grey Knights were wrong.'

'Then where are the crew?' Ragnar asked. 'Why haven't they been responding to our transmissions?' He blink-clicked his visor's vox display. 'All boarding packs, come in.'

'Hostor's Spears, here.'

'Maegar's Pack, affirmative.'

'Asgeir's Allslayers here, my jarl.'

'Contacts?' Ragnar demanded. Negatives crackled back at him, the Blood Claw pack leaders sounding as confused as he was. A rune in his visor lit up, and Ragnar switched channels to accept de Mornay's incoming transmission.

'A trap,' the inquisitor said. *'It has to be.'*

'What makes you so sure?'

'The crew surely wouldn't have simply abandoned the station.'

'We will soon find out,' Ragnar replied, switching back to his pack-wide channel. 'Hostor, take your Claws to the escape shuttle bay, it should be a

hundred yards down the corridor on your left hand.'

'Yes, lord, on our way.' Ragnar switched back.

'De Mornay, what's your current location?'

'It appears to be an outer munitions shaft for the spinward-facing weapons batteries,' de Mornay replied. 'It's deserted though.'

'Hold there,' Ragnar said. 'My Blackpelts and I will join you.'

'Affirmative.'

Ragnar met de Mornay at a junction leading to the weapons batteries. The inquisitor was still mounted on his palanquin, but his ageing body was now armoured in flakplate, and an archaic-looking brass-cased plasma pistol rested in one hand. Alongside him stood his grim-faced Adepta Sororitas bodyguard, clad in the midnight-black purgation-pattern power armour of the Order of Our Martyred Lady.

'You know the star fort's layout?' de Mornay greeted the Wolf Lord.

'It falls under the auspices of the Chapter Fleet,' Ragnar replied. 'It's part of the system defence network. All pack leaders have access to its schematics.'

'So what do you propose we do?' de Mornay asked. 'There's something wrong about all this.' He gestured with his pistol down the deserted corridor behind the Blackpelts.

An update from Hostor clicked in Ragnar's ear before he could reply.

'Lord, only half of the escape shuttles are accounted for. Six have jettisoned.'

'There are shuttles missing,' Ragnar told de Mornay.

The inquisitor frowned.

'The riddle grows more complex. If they were all present I would assume the crew have been slaughtered. But if they evacuated, this place may genuinely be deserted.'

'But why would they leave?' Ragnar asked aloud.

'The central command deck may tell us,' de Mornay said. 'It must have audio and visual logs?'

'And more. It should have recorded the escape shuttles' projected routes. And from there we can set the fort on a more useful course than its current trajectory. Towards Midgardia, for example.' He opened a channel to the three Blood Claw assault packs that had boarded with him.

'Converge on the command deck. I want this riddle solved.'

Transit Line four hundred and three, the Underworld, Midgardia

They'd found them. Phugulus emitted a blast of noxious spore clouds and pointed excitedly down the rail tunnel. The little pack of Wolves had led them to a larger one, and now they'd combined into a single force. Truly, the Grandfather was good.

Behind the daemonic Herald his plaguebearers were dragging themselves from the tunnel burrowed by Garr'nokk, the Great Plague Wurm. Garr'nokk himself was writhing down the rail line towards the Wolves already, his many maws snapping and drooling hungrily. Chewing dirt was clearly not enough – the noble beast was desperate for flesh and blood. Phugulus waved after it.

'Let us bless these great warriors with diseases befitting their might,' he bellowed at his chanting plaguebearers. 'Onwards, dear friends, onwards!'

The plague-recitals of the Infested redoubled in volume and urgency as they set off in Garr'nokk's wake, Phugulus struggling to keep his diseased bulk near the head of his Tallyband. He could see more than just a fortunate gathering of soon-to-be-blessed wolf-men ahead. He could see the whole glory of a new realm ripe for the Grandfather's benedictions. The Midgardian underworld was overly humid, yes, but it was certainly earthy, dark and dank. All manner of mould, fungi and rot could be cultivated in its depths. By the time he returned to his Grandfather's garden he would have a host of wondrous specimens to present.

The possibilities jostled for attention in the Herald's thoughts, so much so that he barely even noticed when the Tallyband crashed into the howling Space Wolves.

The knot of Wolves gathered around Logan Grimnar's fallen crown turned, weapons revving to life. The air was thick with spores, misting their view further back up the transit tunnel. Shapes were limping through the rancid smog, shuffling and moaning with throaty, bile-choked voices.

'The wurm,' Lenold snarled. Egil followed his gaze, and saw that the huge daemonic wurm had returned. It writhed down the tunnel with a hideous peristaltic motion, its blind maws agape. And, once again, a clutch of rotting lesser daemons were following in its wake, using the tunnel gnawed by his multi-fanged jaws to traverse Midgardia's underworld.

'Take the beast,' Egil said. 'We'll close the tunnel again. Then we can purge that foul thing together. It must not be allowed to escape this time.' Lenold only nodded, already moving to meet the wurm head-on.

Egil launched himself into the plaguebearers crawling through the tunnel in the rail highway's wall, his Ironguard beside him. They had to be quick. The counter

on his visor showed the toxicity levels in the air rising rapidly. This Tallyband had clearly brought the surface's corruption with it into Midgardia's depths.

The Iron Wolf's power claws shredded the first plaguebearer he reached for, its rancid form disintegrating into a puddle of decomposing sludge. Egil went through a second and a third, snarling with rage. The memory of the Great Wolf's broken crown lent every blow a furious, unstoppable strength. How dare these weak, putrid monsters threaten his Chapter with destruction? How dare they seek to turn and warp everything the Wolves had defended for so many millennia?

The plaguebearers parted before him, their endless, maddening chants for once falling silent. One of their number pressed to the fore. This one was larger, standing a head taller than the things around it. Its frame was bloated and riven with suppurating sores, its lone, cyclopean eye blinking with an unnatural intelligence from beneath one curling horn. It gripped a pockmarked broadsword in its fist, worm-fingers writhing around the hilt. It was a Herald, a leader of the Tallybands. Egil raised his wolf claws, their power snapping, acknowledging the challenge.

The Herald struck.

Ramilies-class star fort, designate Mjalnar

'The fastest route to the command deck from here is via the barracks blocks,' Ragnar said. 'Kraken formation, don't hesitate to engage if you make contact. Inquisitor...' He turned to face de Mornay. 'Stay close, but don't get in the way.' De Mornay simply shrugged.

'Lead on, Lord Blackmane.'

The Blackpelts set off, Ragnar at the fore. They followed the service chute to a side door that led to a mesh walkway, passing over a vast set of throbbing coolant spheres, used to douse the star fort's heavy artillery when it glowed hot from repeated use. Beyond it lay a communications sub terminal. The vox banks had been shut down, their screens blank, horns silent.

'That explains why we've not been picking up a signal,' de Mornay said. 'But why deactivate them?'

'We'll find out soon enough,' Ragnar growled. He was following the heads-up schematic display of *Mjalnar*, overlaid with the three runes representing the other boarding packs. The system was suffering some sort of interference – the runes showing the locations of the Blood Claws kept blinking from existence,

then reappearing nearby, yet only fractionally closer to the command deck at the star fort's heart. Ragnar voxed them, but all reported good progress. And still there was no sign of life, wyrdling or otherwise.

Beyond the vox terminal was the barracks block. Ragnar glanced into one of the cells as they passed. Its bunk beds were pristine, and kit bags still sat in files along the floor. It was as though *Mjalnar*'s crew were all still present, but had simply become invisible. The Wolf Lord snarled with frustration.

The vox transmissions from the other packs were similarly unhappy. Maegar reported he'd come up against a dead end that didn't exist on the schematics, and had been forced to turn back. Asgeir made a similar report moments later – he'd found himself in a medicae bay that supposedly didn't exist. The pack leader's voice was strained, and Ragnar caught the sound of snarling in the background. The noise shook a growl from his own throat, and his Blackpelts responded in sympathy. They were all hungry, all frustrated.

They passed through the barracks, the command deck just ahead. Ragnar punched in the runes on the security doors, haste forcing him to re-enter them twice. His grip on *Frostfang* tightened. The doors slide back to reveal...

The outer service corridor. The same one they'd first entered *Mjalnar* through. The hole bored by their boarding pod's meltas still gaped in the far wall, its molten edges now jagged and hardened. Ragnar just stared.

'The schematics must be wrong,' Tor said, voice choked. 'Outdated.'

Ragnar realised he was panting. His vision flickered, colours flashing in and out of focus, like a pict caster switching between high and low resolution. He could smell blood, coppery and insistent. His jaw ached, and his fingers itched. Anger flooded his mind. This wasn't what they were here for. This wasn't what he'd endured the Sea of Stars for. Fenris was beset and his warriors were wandering the corridors of some damn, deserted star fort. He needed to kill, now. They all did.

'It's a trick,' de Mornay was saying, attempting to penetrate the fug of bloodlust that was gripping the Wolves. 'They're trying to confound you. Trying to trigger your curse. This star fort is as infested as the one the Grey Knights purged.'

'A... trick...' Ragnar grunted, shaking his head slowly. No. Blood. He needed to spill blood. He could taste it in his mouth. His fangs were starting to distend. *Frostfang* was screaming at him to kill.

'They're here!' de Mornay shouted, plasma pistol whining with charge. 'All around!' The sudden crackle and the scent of ozone cut through Ragnar's consciousness. The Young King gasped and blinked, as though only just waking

from a long, dark nightmare. He realised ozone was not the only thing he could smell. The unmistakable stench of wyrd-taint was suddenly everywhere.

Shrieking with rage, the daemons broke their illusion and flung themselves upon the Space Wolves.

The Rock, in high orbit above Midgardia

Far below, fire billowed and spread. The Elezar-thing, the Changeling, watched it from the Rock's vast, stain-tinted bridge viewing ports. From so far away, it looked like an insignificant thing at first. The deathstorm missiles unleashed by the Imperial Navy's capital ships were like little shards of starlight, quickly lost on their way to the surface. They bloomed again amidst Midgardia's purple shades, little pricks of light set against the diseased darkness. Only when those pinpricks eventually began to meet and cluster did they truly start to spread. The Changeling didn't bother to control its grin, masked as it was by Elezar's skull helm.

The flames grew and flourished, until they had embraced a third of Midgardia's visible surface, black ash clouds starting to obscure the upper atmosphere. A part of the Changeling wished it could be down there, experiencing the raw, chaotic annihilation in person. Perhaps, in a different existence among one of Fate's many other paths, it would walk the surface of Midgardia during its fiery execution. It would see the inferno devouring the planet's diseased, infected foliage, bursting blighted bark and setting light to the surfaces of the pus-bogs. It would see Tallybands sent blazing back to the warp, just as the fires roasted the human people of Midgardia and gutted the spires of the Magma Gates. Only into the underworld would the flames fail to reach. That did not concern the Changeling. There would be more than enough time to deal with those lost Wolves.

Grandfather Nurgle would be infuriated by the torching of his new possession. The thought only fuelled the Changeling's delight. In all of Creation and Uncreation, only its master knew the final form of the tapestry it wove from Fate's threads, but even the small patch the Changeling saw before it was glorious to behold.

The Elezar-thing snapped its gaze away from the sight of the burning world. It had let its thoughts drift. There was still work to be done. Swiftly, it turned from the viewing ports and paced from the bridge, back towards the Interrogator-Chaplain's cell.

Midgardia was only the beginning.

Iron Requiem, in high orbit above Svellgard

Iron Captain Terrek reached out and touched the soul of the machine. The Clan Commander felt the spirit of his battle-barge rise up from the depths as he finished plugging himself into *Iron Requiem's* command throne, neural links, spine cords and gene-coils, draped with purity seals, binding him to the centre of the bridge. Terrek always found it a thrilling sensation, to commune so directly, so intimately, with something that had never known the weak constraints of the flesh.

Iron Requiem was ancient. It had forged through the stars and brought the Emperor's light to the darkest reaches of the galaxy for almost eight thousand years. Yet the soul of the machine was anything but old and sluggish. It spoke to Terrek freely, as an old friend, of its pride at the successful lance strike against Morkai's Keep, twinned with its shame at unleashing its weapons upon brother Adeptus Astartes. Terrek quietened its fears. The Space Wolves were at best mutants, and at worst traitors. They were barbarous savages who had run rampant through the stars, unchecked by any authority, for far too long. Now the Iron Hands would help bring them to heel.

Terrek had deactivated his bionic eyes. Now he saw directly through the *Iron Requiem's* augur arrays, the data fed back to him in a steady stream through the throne's many ports. Svellgard hung below them, a little blue-grey orb framed by the vast, icy sphere of Frostheim behind it. Around the orb clustered what looked from a distance like swarms of airborne insects. With a thought Terrek increased the augur magnification, picking out individual ships from among the fleet that hung around the moon. Most were Astra Militarum mass transporters and Imperial Navy battleships, but Terrek also noted the proud blue heraldry of a sleek Ultramarines Strike Cruiser.

As per the agreed plan, the sons of Guilliman had not yet committed any of their squads to Svellgard's surface, allowing the Astra Militarum and the atmospheric aircraft of the Imperial Navy to secure the island beachheads. They would be sufficient to assess the threat, and from there decide whether to reinforce the Wolves or destroy them with their moon. Only once the enemy's main strength had been pinpointed would the Angels of Death commit themselves. As a strategy it was both simple and logically optimal. The Clan Company's Iron Father had gone so far as to compute an eighty-seven per cent

likelihood of success.

Such figures brought Terrek as close to pleasure as was possible nowadays, but unknown factors still remained. One of those was playing out even as *Iron Requiem* joined the rest of the crusade fleet around Svellgard. Terrek noted multiple sensors tracking a powerful energy signal on the surface below. Visual scanning was struggling to map a reliable image of the thing causing the disturbance. Whatever it was, it appeared to be neverborn in nature. Terrek filtered the garbled *Astra Militarum* vox messages being translated back to their commanders in orbit. Fire. Death. Rage. Terrek assessed and dismissed each keyword in turn. Wings. Axe. Blood. Daemon.

Greater Daemon.

Bloodthirster.

He felt even the mighty spirit of *Iron Requiem* shudder as they made the joint realisation of what was attacking the Claws of the World Wolf below. One of Khorne's mighty champions had burst into being beneath the moon's cold waves. That could only mean the warp rifts were even more unstable than they had initially calculated. The sooner he acted the better.

His implants calculating range, azimuth, diffraction and speed projections, the Iron Hands captain began to plot another firing solution for his battle-barge's lance battery.

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Published in 2016 by Black Library, Games Workshop Ltd,
Willow Road, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, UK.

Cover illustration by Mark Holmes.
Produced by Games Workshop in Nottingham.

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ISBN: 978-1-78572-210-3

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