

WARHAMMER 40,000



SPACE WOLVES 6 THE WOLF WITHIN

WARHAMMER
40,000



SPACE WOLVES 6
THE WOLF WITHIN

SPACE WOLVES

THE WOLF WITHIN

Rob Sanders

An ornament hanging silently in the void, the Space Marines strike cruiser took station above the tiny world of Skarapaz XVIII.

‘It’s the High Priest,’ Sergeant Beoric Winterfang announced, identifying the vessel from its rugged outline. Still recovering from his injuries, the sergeant held his shattered ribs as he spoke. It was painful, but he did not let on. ‘Ulrik is here. Grandfather Lupus has come for us.’

Krom Dragongaze joined the sergeant out on the frozen rock of the unassuming world, sulphuric snow crunching beneath his boots. The plummeting temperatures would have killed any normal man. To the dark eldar who had made an outpost on the outlying world, it was no doubt a painful fetish. To Fenrisians, it was nothing. The mild chill of a world orbiting far from its five suns.

The pair watched as a Stormwolf gunship dropped from Ulrik’s cruiser, the *Canis Pax*, and made its way across the surface of the rocky planet.

As the Stormwolf came in to land, Krom read the name *Rolling Thunder* emblazoned on the gunship’s scarred side. It was a venerable craft and the veteran of many furious engagements. Putting down on the outpost’s primitive launch pad, the gunship whipped up snow and grit about it. Walking up behind the Wolf Lord and his sergeant were Grundar Greymane and the surviving Space Wolves. Behind them were Interrogator-Chaplain Balthus of the Dark Angels and Brother Othniel, the Librarian who had sent word of their location to both their Dark Angels brethren and the Wolves stationed over Dactyla. It was the Sons of Russ, however, who had received the message and come for their kindred.

Grundar Greymane started the chant, which was picked up by Sergeant Beoric and the Space Wolves about him. Before long it became a roared mantra.

‘Lupus, Lupus, Lupus...’

The transport compartment ramp lowered as the *Rolling Thunder* landed and cut its engines. A Space Marine emerged. It was not the High Priest, but the Wolf Guard Beregelt. He smiled at seeing his master.

‘My lord,’ the Space Wolf said. ‘Ulrik the Slayer offers you greeting.’

‘We are obliged to you and the venerable Slayer,’ Krom said, as Ulrik’s men filed out to assume a cordon about the gunship. Ulrik himself, a vision of doom in his wolf skull helm and furs, stepped off the ramp last, out onto the rock and snow.

‘Lord Dragongaze,’ Ulrik greeted Krom. ‘Scion of the Sun Wolf – it is a pity we should meet in such a benighted place.’

‘You are well met, wherever duty finds us,’ Krom told him honestly.

Ulrik’s optics settled on the Dark Angels behind.

Krom glanced back and forth between the two. ‘This is...’ he hesitated.

‘Balthus,’ the Dark Angel said. He gave the Slayer a slow nod, which the Wolf High Priest returned with suspicion.

‘And Brother Othniel,’ Krom said, ‘who was responsible for determining our location and summoning aid.’

‘Yes,’ Ulrik said, his breath misting about him. He let the word hang there in the freezing air. ‘You can’t imagine how surprised we were to receive your message from an Angel of the First.’

‘The Interrogator-Chaplain and Brother Othniel were instrumental in our escape from the xenos.’

‘Yes,’ Ulrik said again. ‘You look like hell.’

Finally the Slayer stood aside, extending an arm towards his gunship. Sergeant Beoric and the surviving Drakeslayers filed between them and into the troop compartment. The Space Wolves were eager to get weaponry back into their hands and join their brothers under the High Priest’s command.

‘Interrogator-Chaplain,’ Ulrik acknowledged, using the appropriate term of address, as the four of them mounted the ramp. The door closed on the dark eldar outpost and the tiny, frozen world of Skarapaz XVIII. The engines fired and the *Rolling Thunder* took off.

‘Incoming transmission,’ Beregelt told Ulrik. ‘It’s the shipmistress, my lord.’

‘Shipmistress Asgir,’ the Slayer said, changing vox channels. ‘This is Ulrik. Our mission has been a success. We have extracted Lord Krom and his

Drakeslayers. Prepare the ship. I want you to make way as soon as the gunship is aboard.'

'The *Canis Pax* stands ready to receive you, Master Ulrik,' the shipmistress voxed back.

As Balthus and Brother Othniel came up behind, Beregelt and another Wolf Guard took them by the plate of their forearms and slapped a pair of manacles on the two Dark Angels. The Interrogator-Chaplain did not resist, instead simply giving Ulrik the blank gaze of his skull-helm optics.

'Is that really necessary, High Priest?' Krom felt compelled to say. He had expected some friction, perhaps harsh words from the High Priest, who had lived long enough for the rift between their two Chapters to become a prejudice, but Krom had not anticipated such measures.

'The Angels fought side by side with us. They have already known with us the cold touch of bar and chain.'

'And they will know it again,' Ulrik the Slayer said, 'if they are to board the *Canis Pax* with us.'

The Space Marines in the troop compartment reached out for bars and supports as the Stormwolf banked. Before Krom could protest, the compartment voxhailer came to life above his head.

'High Priest,' a voice crackled across the voxhailer. It was the Space Wolf pilot, Rogan Bearsbane. 'I have targets.'

'Targets?' Ulrik said.

'Out here?' Krom echoed.

'The strike cruiser augurs told us nothing of this,' the Slayer said.

'They do now, my lord,' the pilot said. '*Canis Pax* reports the approach vector between us and the cruiser crowded with enemy vessels. They were cloaked by the dust and some kind of alien field technology.'

'Do you have numbers?' Krom asked.

'Hundreds of fighters and assault craft,' Rogan Bearsbane confirmed, as the Stormwolf swerved this way and that on the approach.

'And our foe?' Ulrik asked.

'Xenos pirates, High Priest.'

'Dark eldar,' Interrogator-Chaplain Balthus said.

'Too many for a raiding party,' Krom said. He looked at Ulrik. 'There must be larger vessels in the area – veiled, like the attack craft.'

The Slayer reached up and clunked a thick switch on the voxhailer.

'*Canis Pax*, are you monitoring this?' the High Priest asked.

‘Aye, my lord,’ Shipmistress Asgir returned. ‘We are awaiting your instructions.’

Krom gave the Slayer a grim look. His Drakeslayers had been dogged by misfortune. Now they had brought the same misfortune down on the High Priest and his venerable strike cruiser.

‘Have the navigation officer plot his solutions and ready the warp engines for immersion,’ Ulrik ordered.

‘But, High Priest,’ Asgir protested. ‘We can’t leave you behind.’

‘You won’t have to,’ the Slayer insisted. ‘Have the flight deck prepare for our arrival.’

‘The enemy crowds the approach, my lord,’ the pilot insisted, as Ulrik threw the vox switch back. ‘They block our progress with their darkness.’

‘We are the claw that tears its way through such darkness,’ Ulrik the Slayer told him. ‘We make way for the Emperor’s light. Proceed.’

‘Yes, my lord.’

Krom held on as the *Rolling Thunder* accelerated away. He heard the boom of harpoons and grapnels smashing against the gunship’s armoured hull as the dark eldar craft attempted to gain purchase. He looked up as thick spiked chains rattled cacophonously across the top of the Stormwolf.

Krom felt the gunship swerve suddenly to avoid a collision, pull up and then plunge into a further acceleration. Balthus stumbled back a little, his manacled gauntlets struggling to find anchorage on the compartment wall. Ulrik watched the Dark Angel, his optics burning bright, while the Space Wolves assigned to watch over him stuck close like a shadow. Krom felt the gunship’s skyhammer missile launcher fire again and again, before hearing the whoosh of detonations and a prang of debris wash across the hull. The explosions were followed by the searing blast of lascannons, underscored by the rhythmic chatter of heavy bolters. Krom marvelled at the number of targets the gunship crew were contending with. Rogan Bearsbane had not been exaggerating. The *Rolling Thunder* was punching its way through a veritable swarm of twisted dark eldar ships. Krom heard the rattle of heavy grade splinter fire shattering its way across the gunship.

‘Prepare for impact,’ the Space Wolf pilot called across the vox.

Krom readied himself. Everyone inside the compartment lurched forward as the *Rolling Thunder* smashed through the blizzard of dark eldar fighters and boarding craft. A shockwave passed down the superstructure of the gunship from the armoured prow to the engine columns. Space Wolves were knocked forward,

their mag-locked boots clunking to new anchorage. Even Ulrik staggered, and the Dark Angels were forced to steady themselves as best they could with their manacled hands. Alarms and klaxons fired in the compartment, indicating the collision.

‘Report!’ the Slayer barked into the wall vox.

‘The *Rolling Thunder* is clear,’ Rogan Bearsbane confirmed. ‘But the enemy intends to pursue.’

‘Prepare for evasive manoeuvres, on the shipmistress’ mark,’ Ulrik said as the Stormwolf accelerated again. The Slayer changed channels. Shipmistress?’

‘Standing by, my lord,’ Asgir replied.

‘Load and prime your weaponry,’ Ulrik said. ‘We have company. I want you to welcome them with the primarch’s own thunder. Do you understand?’

‘Yes, my lord. Understood,’ Asgir said.

Krom moved up amongst his surviving Drakeslayers, checking in with his brothers. The blood and filth on their faces and the sorry state of their plate told him how much they had suffered. They were not beaten, however. The arrival of their brother Wolves had re-energised Krom’s men. As he moved through them they returned his enquires with an obedient eagerness. In the dark eldar arena they had been cornered animals: tormented and caged. Now, back among the ranks of Russ’ own, their eyes glinted with a predacious pack mentality. Their score with the dark eldar would not be settled with bolt and blade, however. The xenos challenge would be answered in fire and thunder.

Krom felt forces tear at him as the *Rolling Thunder* banked sharply to avoid streams of dark energy from pursuing fighters. The Wolf Lord could only imagine the swarm of dark eldar ships pursuing them. Vehicles of spike, blade and serration, trailing chains and razored anchors. Slave ships laden with miserable specimens forced to fight. Torture craft brimming with dark eldar warriors.

‘*Rolling Thunder*,’ Shipmistress Asgir said, her voice intruding on the compartment from the open voxhailer. ‘Cannons in range. You are cleared to leave your plane of approach and enact evasive manoeuvres.’

Krom felt the Stormwolf ascend. Already blasting through the void at maximum speed, the pilot put the gunship into a steep and sudden climb.

‘You are cleared to fire, *Canis Pax*,’ Ulrik told Asgir.

‘Very good, my lord,’ the shipmistress answered before the vox communicated the ear-splitting boom of the strike cruiser’s cannonry firing in monstrous unison. The Space Wolves in the compartment added their roaring cheers to the

firepower, willing the pursuing swarm of dark eldar craft to be decimated.

‘Status?’ Ulrik demanded.

‘The enemy have sustained catastrophic losses, my lord,’ the shipmistress said, ‘but so great are their number that their pursuit continues.’

‘Shall we never be rid of this alien scum?’ Krom rumbled.

‘I’m priming the gundecks for another broadside,’ the shipmistress told him, but the Slayer seemed to have lost interest.

‘Belay that,’ the High Priest ordered. ‘One day the Wolves will return and raze the dark place that spawned these foul xenos to the ground, but today our escape must be clean and complete. Have the flight decks cleared for a high-speed landing. Make way, Shipmistress. I want my ship on a translation approach by the time we arrive.’

‘I await you on the bridge, my lord,’ Shipmistress Asgir said.

‘Rogan, take us in,’ Ulrik commanded.

The compartment rolled to one side as the *Rolling Thunder* changed course. Krom held onto the section wall. Firing its mighty sub-light engines, the *Canis Pax* pulled away, forcing the gunship, and presumably the pursuing pirates, to change the angle of their approach to meet the moving strike cruiser. The voxhailer crackled with the pilot’s countdown of the reducing distance.

‘Brace for impact!’ Rogan Bearsbane said finally. Krom put himself behind the Dark Angels to prevent them falling back. He saw that Ulrik noticed this gesture, although the High Priest said nothing. Krom felt the gunship bounce beneath his mag-locked boots. The pilot had brought the *Rolling Thunder* in at speed and on her armoured belly to save the landing gears. A horrific shearing sound passed through the compartment as the gunship skidded across the flight deck, leaving behind a shower of sparks. Krom prepared himself for the impact, but it never came. The gunship drew to a soft halt, lamps inside the compartment flashing. The ramp slowly lowered to the deck.

As Ulrik and his Space Marines filed out, Krom hit the stud on the voxhailer.

‘My compliments, brother,’ he told Rogan Bearsbane, before exiting with his Drakeslayers.

It felt good to be back on the void-chilled iron of a Space Wolf deck. It was only now, however, that Krom could truly appreciate what the Space Wolves had passed through. Krom beheld the swarm of dark eldar craft. Like an ink stain spreading across vellum, the dark eldar approached through the nebulous dust of the system – the obscurity in which they had lain hidden. Krom turned to see Ulrik behind him, taking in the dread spectacle. Interrogator-Chaplain Balthus

and Brother Othniel were with them, under guard. The Slayer turned to leave, heading for the bridge. There was no time to lose.

‘Bridge, this is Ulrik,’ he said into his helmet vox. ‘Get us out of here. All I want these xenos wretches to see is the blaze of our engines until they can see it no more.’

‘Understood, High Priest,’ Asgir returned.

‘With me, Lord Dragongaze,’ Ulrik said. ‘Bring your prisoners.’

Krom bit back a snarl. He looked at Balthus and Brother Othniel and the Space Wolf guard that the High Priest had put on them.

‘This way, Interrogator-Chaplain,’ Krom said, leading them off the flight deck. Looking to Beoric Winterfang, he added, ‘Sergeant, get yourself and our Drakeslayers to the Apothecarion.’

‘And you, my lord,’ Grundar Greymane said, for indeed, Krom was a mess.

‘I will be along shortly,’ the Wolf Lord said. ‘In the event of a boarding action, you should be where you are most needed: defending this ship.’

As the mighty *Canis Pax* made its manoeuvres, Krom accompanied Ulrik and the Dark Angels to the strike cruiser’s command deck. The danger Krom had brought upon the High Priest and his ship became ever more apparent on the bridge, where reverse lancet screens revealed black tendrils of smaller craft reaching out for the *Canis Pax* like a monster of the deep. As the strike cruiser completed its turn, the shipmistress ordered the warp engines primed.

Ulrik growled to himself as the blaze of a full burn torched countless vanguard fighters and alien boarders intent on being the first to reach the *Canis Pax*’s hull. With the rumble of engines passing through the deck, both Space Wolves and Dark Angels watched as the dark cloud of raiders receded, the xenos pursuit craft no match for the colossal engine columns of the Spaces Wolves strike cruiser.

‘Forward screens,’ Shipmistress Asgir called as deck serfs took the *Canis Pax* at full speed towards the system’s Mandeville point.

The bridge lancet screens admitted the bottomless glory of the void. The bridge lamps flickered. Runebanks and command deck cogitators faded for a moment and tripped in their workings, before returning to functionality. Deck serfs and servitors began calling out warnings as their instrumentation fed them new data. The shipmistress moved down the line of machines, checking the readings for herself.

Krom didn’t need the *Canis Pax*’s augurs and scanners. Standing with Ulrik, he

could see the three vessels growing on the forward screen. The ships surfaced from the warp, piercing the static super storm of a dimensional transference. The opening bled colour as an agitation of alternate realities rubbed against one another. Even prow on, coming straight at the *Canis Pax*, Krom could make out the belligerence of Adeptus Astartes cruisers, the vessels smashing back into reality. The noble green of the hull was unmistakable. They were the proud vessels of the First Legion.

Ulrik the Slayer snarled.

‘Strike cruisers, my lord,’ Shipmistress Asgir reported. ‘They are arming their prow weaponry.’

Krom turned, but Ulrik was fast, even for a Space Wolf of half his age. The High Priest had grabbed Interrogator-Chaplain Balthus by his robes and slammed him back into the command deck wall. Even the Space Wolves guarding the Dark Angel were surprised at the sudden violence of Ulrik’s movements.

‘A little surprise for us, Interrogator-Chaplain?’ the Slayer said, their skull helms almost touching.

‘You seem surprised,’ Balthus replied evenly.

‘Ulrik,’ Krom called, grabbing both by the arms, trying to prise them apart.

‘Do you know why they call them *Interrogator*-Chaplains?’ Ulrik asked Krom.

‘Ulrik...’ Krom said.

‘They judge and are judged,’ the High Priest spat. ‘They are happy to keep their secrets while they expose the secrets of others.’

‘And I’m sure you have plenty,’ the Interrogator-Chaplain intoned.

‘My lord, we must act,’ Shipmistress Asgir warned. Krom Dragongaze feared what the Slayer’s next order would be.

‘Intensify forward shields,’ Ulrik barked, his blood-bright optics burning into Brother Balthus, ‘and ready the prow cannon. We shall end this before it begins.’

‘Ulrik, don’t,’ Krom said.

‘First blood shall be ours, brother,’ Ulrik told Krom before looking back at the Dark Angel. ‘For ’tis a dangerous thing to corner a wolf...’

It was too late, however. In that moment, looking through the lancet screens, Krom knew that he had been wrong. He saw the flash of the vessels’ prow cannons, engaging in unison.

‘The Dark Angels are firing,’ Shipmistress Asgir confirmed from her augurbanks and cogitator.

Krom stared at Interrogator-Chaplain Balthus in disbelief.

‘Fire!’ Ulrik the Slayer roared. Letting go of Balthus, he clasped his gauntlets around the pulpit rail, projecting his fury at the attacking Dark Angel vessels on the lancet screens.

Krom Dragongaze prepared for impact. Fired upon by three Dark Angel strike cruisers, the *Canis Pax* was about to take an incredible hit. The Space Wolves ship could even be destroyed. With the Wolf High Priest bellowing orders across the command deck, Krom grabbed Brother Balthus from where Ulrik had abandoned him. Snatching the Interrogator-Chaplain by the robes, Krom held him against the bridge wall. Something didn’t seem quite right to Krom, however. Like a scent out of place or a too-easy kill, the attack simply didn’t make sense. The Dark Angels seemed to know Balthus was on board and yet they would fire on the ship carrying him.

Krom grabbed for anchorage on the bridge wall and engaged the magnetic soles of his boots. The blasts rocketing away from the three strike cruisers converged upon the *Canis Pax*. They would hit any second.

‘Prepare for impact,’ Shipmistress Asgir called to her command deck, clutching the pulpit rail near her command throne.

But the impact never came. The *Canis Pax* didn’t buck or shake. Wiring didn’t cascade from the ceiling or flame roll through the section. Deck serfs and servitors were not knocked from their consoles and Space Wolves did not rage at the mendacious Angels.

A light rumble went through the strike cruiser’s superstructure as the blasts rocketed down the length of the *Canis Pax*. Ulrik stared at Asgir and then about the command deck.

‘They missed,’ the shipmistress said.

‘Not likely,’ Krom said.

‘Aft feeds,’ Ulrik barked.

With a sizzle of static, Asgir had a deck serf change the lancet screens to a pict-feed of the strike cruiser’s rear. Magma bomb warheads streaked behind the *Canis Pax*, and they did indeed appear to have missed.

But then their true target revealed itself. From amid the swarm of dark eldar fighters and assault craft the *Canis Pax* had left in its wake, three larger vessels were pursuing them. They had managed to avoid the *Canis Pax*’s augur arrays and pict feeds by using some kind of exotic field technology to obscure their presence, but now they were shedding their ambush shielding.

Firing upon the pursuing shadows, the Dark Angel strike cruisers had turned the disguised torture ships into crackling tempests of erupting destruction. Krom

got the brief impression of graceful, spindly craft – all blade-vanes and willowy darkness. One moment the piratical cruisers were stealthily moving up behind the *Canis Pax*, like great black scorpions of the void ready to strike – the next they were a chain reaction of ghostly explosions. As the ships detonated with alien energies, the shattered architecture flew in all directions, like a primed grenade of wicked, gargantuan shrapnel.

The bridge was silent. Krom looked to Brother Balthus, who gave him an emotionless stare. The Wolf Lord released his hold on the Interrogator-Chaplain.

‘Ulrik,’ Krom said, when no one else spoke. The Slayer put up his gauntleted hand.

‘Screens,’ Ulrik growled. The lancet screens returned the bridge to a view of the closing Dark Angel cruisers. The *Canis Pax* had struck the centre vessel with a blast of its own, turning the starboard sections of the dark green cruiser into a battle-scarred mess of mangled architecture and rupturing detonations. Ulrik ordered, ‘Open a channel with the Dark Angel cruisers.’

‘Which one?’ Shipmistress Asgir asked.

‘Any bloody one,’ Ulrik said. ‘And be lively about it.’

‘Balthus,’ Krom said. There was necessity in the Wolf Lord’s voice. The situation had to be salvaged. The Emperor’s Angels had fired upon one another. Damage had been done. Lives had been lost. The appearance of treachery once more dogged the Adeptus Astartes. Krom would not allow such misfortune to escalate. ‘Interrogator-Chaplain, please.’

When Balthus spoke, his words were heavy and cold, like the pitted steel of an ancient weapon. He pointed with a ceramite finger.

‘The *Calibos*,’ he said, identifying one of the vessels. ‘The ship you opened fire on is the *Semper Fortis*. Mine is the *Repentance*.’

‘Channel open,’ Asgir reported.

‘*Repentance*, this is the *Canis Pax*,’ Ulrik said. ‘Please respond.’

Static proceeded from the bridge voxhailers.

‘*Repentance*,’ the Slayer pressed, ‘I am Ulrik, High Priest of the Space Wolves. Your flotilla has sustained damage at my hand, but your destruction was not our intent. The galaxy is broad and wide and the mistakes made within its borders are many. This is one such mistake. We thought we were under attack and responded, as any of the Emperor’s blood is engineered to do. We seek parley to repair the damage we have done and atone for the offence committed. Please respond.’

Once more the Space Wolves’ patience was rewarded with static. All the while

the Dark Angels vessels grew larger in the lancet screens. Krom turned on Brother Balthus.

‘Tell them,’ the Wolf Lord insisted.

The Interrogator-Chaplain, however, said nothing.

‘We have two of your brothers among our number,’ Ulrik said, the annoyance obvious in his aged voice. ‘A Chaplain and a Librarian that we should like to return to you.’

Krom detected it first. Something in the air. A heat without temperature. The sizzle of scorched reality.

‘Teleporter signatures!’ Shipmistress Asgir called out. While the Space Wolves had been concerning themselves with making contact, the Dark Angels had simply transported themselves aboard. A lead mist bled into manifestation on the command deck. Shapes in bone white terminator armour appeared on the bridge. Boltguns were primed as the Dark Angels peered down barrels and muzzles at their Space Wolf targets. The Space Wolves on the bridge, in turn, thrust their own weapons with ferocity and shock at the armoured interlopers.

Krom marvelled at the perfect execution of the boarding. He grabbed Brother Balthus once more by the filthy material of his robes and pulled them apart to reveal a teleporter homer on the Interrogator-Chaplain’s belt. Balthus must have had it on him the whole time.

Krom snarled, to himself rather than Balthus, but that didn’t stop a Dark Angel officer thudding the muzzle of his bolt pistol into Krom’s temple.

Balthus shrugged off the Space Wolf’s grasp, straightening his robes.

‘It doesn’t have to be this way,’ Krom said, as Balthus moved through the stand-off, uncaring of the boltguns and furious glares being cast across the command deck.

‘Angels are dead, Wolf,’ the officer hissed through his helmet’s vox-grille.

‘We have all lost brothers to the desperation of these shared circumstances,’ Krom said.

‘We share nothing,’ Brother Balthus said.

‘But we could,’ Ulrik suggested quietly. He stared at the Interrogator-Chaplain. ‘We have worked side by side in brotherly accord against a common foe.’

‘You opened fire upon our vessels,’ the Dark Angels officer said, his words sharp like the blade that sat in the scabbard on his belt.

‘We thought we were under attack,’ Krom said.

‘You were,’ Balthus told him, ‘but not by warriors of the First.’

‘Forgive me,’ Ulrik the Slayer said. The word seemed unnatural proceeding

from the cracked lips of such a venerable Space Wolf. ‘Is that not what you are empowered to do, Interrogator-Chaplain? Forgive me. For it was my vessel that opened fire upon your own. My order that authorised that attack. Forgive the blunt words of diplomacy, that catch on the sharpness of my teeth and are an ill-fit for the mouth from which they come. Forgive one, like you, of the Emperor’s blood – who wishes a brotherly alliance out here, where the void is empty and humanity’s foes myriad. Accept a mistake for what it is and together we shall lay your kindred to rest.’

Krom looked from the High Priest to the Interrogator-Chaplain. Balthus had stopped wandering across the bridge and was now staring out through the screens at the Dark Angel ships holding the *Canis Pax* in their sights.

‘Interrogator-Chaplain–’ the Dark Angels officer began.

‘We are Adeptus Astartes all,’ Krom interrupted. ‘We have all come to this miserable corner of the galaxy on the Emperor’s business.’

Balthus turned to face them. He seemed to have reached a decision.

‘Very well. I seek a traitor of the Alpha Legion,’ the Interrogator-Chaplain began. ‘He has escaped from our custody and is to be punished for his many crimes – but first we have to find him, and that task has proven... challenging.’

‘We seek someone too,’ Ulrik said. ‘The Great Wolf. We hunt for him as he hunts for our Lord Russ. I know that in the past our fathers have not always seen eye to eye. I know that in the stormy present our Chapters have had precious little upon which to build brotherly love. I would ask you, Interrogator-Chaplain, to allow for a future in which our two Chapters work together for the accomplishment of separate deeds. Allow the Space Wolves, in recognition of the losses you have suffered at our hand, to hunt down your quarry with you. In turn, permit us to learn what we can of our lost leader from this transgressor – for the arrival of the Great Wolf with his warrior host in this wretched region of space will not have gone unnoticed.’

For the longest time, the Interrogator-Chaplain did not speak.

‘Stand down,’ he told his Dark Angels finally. The officer hesitated before reholstering his pistol. The barrels of aimed boltguns drifted slowly towards the floor before the chaplain’s orders were conveyed to the *Calibos*, the *Semper Fortis* and the *Repentance*. Balthus nodded to Krom and then to Ulrik, the Wolf Lord and High Priest returning the solemn acceptance. ‘Once more,’ Balthus told them, ‘the galaxy shall witness the sons of the Lion and the Wolf hunting together.’

Krom could feel the lightness of his steps. It was welcome. His injuries were still healing and his artificer plate had only benefitted from the most basic of repairs. As he ran the suit still rattled about him and his armoured boots pounded the marble underfoot to shattered stone. On the low-gravity world of Stratovass Ultra, however, his plate weighed significantly less than it did on Fenris, or aboard the *Canis Pax*.

The Blood Claws of Squad Greymane ran beside him with Grundar following, a ravenous pack of Fenrisian wolves snapping and seething on adamantium chains. The beasts had the scent and were leading the Space Wolves through the mighty spirehalls and palatial pinnacles of Eyriax – the capital hive city of Stratovass Ultra.

Interrogator-Chaplain Balthus had brought them there on the trail of the Alpha Legionnaire, Sathar the Undone. The *Ironpelt* had followed the *Canis Pax* to this world from Dactyla. Ulrik the Slayer and Sergeant Beoric Winterfang had remained with the Space Wolves vessels, while Brother Othniel and the other Dark Angels had returned to the *Repentance*. The strike cruisers, both Space Wolf and Dark Angel, held station high above the hive world. Meanwhile, Krom had unleashed his Fenrisian beasts and the neophytes of his Drakeslayers on the world's surface. With the Interrogator-Chaplain's gathered intelligence and the hunter's instincts of the Space Wolves, Krom was confident that they would catch Sathar the Undone.

Planetfall had taken them to the rusted dunes of Stratovass. The traitor's scent had led them through the stilt shanties in the capital hive's towering shadow. The Space Wolves had followed Sathar up through the Chartist dry docks, where the skeletal frameworks of merchant freighters, haulage brigs and tenders were under construction.

Krom had got his first look at their quarry in the nest of cloud-swathed spires that reached up from the surface of Stratovass like a spiked crown. Sathar was a broad, imposing figure in dark armour and robes, his face lost in a hood. Great bat-like wings erupted from the space between his backplate and pack, but it was impossible to tell whether they were real appendages or a theatrical affectation. Carrying the broad blade of a sword that was almost as tall as him, Sathar was fleeing through the vaulted halls and palaces of the spires. Krom caught sight of him on one of the myriad walkways extending between the nest of towers, moments before he disappeared in the clouds.

Without the pack of wolves and the keen senses of the indefatigable Blood Claws, they would have lost the traitor, since the clouds of Stratovass didn't only

bury the palace towers in a beautiful haze but manifested within the spirehalls, high corridors and great chambers.

As the wolf pack snagged and snarled their way through the luxurious accommodations, their claws tore up rugs and flagstones. Grundar Greymane let the beasts have their head and run on their adamantium chains. His Blood Claws, young and short of hair, whiskers and fangs, moved through the palaces with a feral grace. In the low gravity, the slick glide of their movements took them over ornate furniture, through stained-glass windows and up grand staircases with ease. They were the headstrong Sons of Russ and the Emperor's genekin, with nothing to fear from even the most powerful of the hiveworld's inhabitants. Heavy-set, with a lifetime's worth of muscle and experience, Grundar and his Wolf Lord were slower and more measured in their movements, with Brother Balthus in his fresh, streaming robes coming up behind.

'Grundar,' Krom said. 'Bring him down.'

The Drakeslayers were so close. They had hunted the renegade up through the hive. Cornering him in the pinnacle palaces, the Space Wolves had given their quarry nowhere to go. Krom could not risk the possibility of the Legionnaire reaching a launch pad or pick-up from a terrace balcony.

At his Wolf Lord's order, Grundar Greymane released one of his Fenrisian beasts. The wolf surged away from the pack, finally at liberty to run its prey down. The Space Wolves followed the creature as it weaved through pillars, bounded balustrades and made short work of hall expanses. It disappeared into the mists hanging in the palace chambers but its fellow beasts, still on Grundar's chains, showed the way.

Suddenly Krom heard the most awful sound. The shriek of a beast in agony and shock, followed by a dismal moan of death that echoed perversely through the misted chambers. It wasn't long before the Blood Claws found the wolf. It had been skewered through the jaws and the length of its body, by what Krom could only imagine was the Chaos Space Marine's monstrous blade. Striding through the mist-cloaked antechamber, Krom found himself outside on a platform. Three bridgeways, made of chain and lightweight metal planking, spanned the gap between the palace tower they were in and the other spires reaching up out of the clouds. The jangling walkways themselves were lost in the haze.

Behind him, Grundar's wolves snapped and spat, while the Blood Claws caught their breath and awaited orders. Laying his gauntlet on the chains of one bridge and then the others, Krom felt for the tremble and bounce of a recent crossing.

'This one,' the Wolf Lord said. A Blood Claw with a mane of red hair and side

whiskers went to follow but Krom put his hand up. Sending a jangle through the chain walkway with his gauntlet, the Wolf Lord waited. He looked at Brother Balthus, who gave a nod of approval. A sharp clang cut through the cloudy obscurity in which the hive spires were lost. The sound of metal upon metal. Krom stepped back, the chain feeling suddenly loose in his grip. He listened for the sound of the falling walkway, the tangle of metal and chain cut away by Sathar the Undone on the other side. The traitor had waited for them, feeling for their crossing as Krom had done before intending to send the Wolves plummeting to their deaths. Stratovass Ultra was a low gravity world but a fall from the towering hive spires of the Eyriax would still mean certain death.

Krom studied the other two walkways. They vanished into the mist, so he could not be sure where they led. He turned to Balthus.

‘You’ve pursued this traitor before,’ Krom said to him. ‘What is the best course of action?’

‘We’ll separate and entrap him,’ Balthus said. ‘I’ll go this way.’ He indicated the walkway on the right. ‘You take your Wolves by the other route. We shall cut him off and attack from all sides.’

Krom nodded, and without another word Balthus set off across the jangling walkway. He was quickly swallowed by the looming mist.

Krom moved over to a Blood Claw called Skvaldigar Frostfang, an eager Drakeslayer whose scalp was a nest of short braids. He knew Skvaldigar to be savage and hungry for promotion.

‘Brother,’ Krom said, ‘do you think you and your Claws can make that jump?’

Skvaldigar grinned, showing his needle teeth.

‘Or we’ll die trying,’ the Blood Claw said.

‘Bring me that traitor,’ Krom ordered. ‘Alive.’

It was the Wolves’ best chance to corner him. The Blood Claws would attempt to jump across to the mist-wreathed spire while Krom, Grundar and the Fenrisian beast pack traversed the chain walkways between their tower and another. From there they could cross back to cut their quarry off.

‘Grundar, with me.’

Krom led the way towards another chain walkway. The jangling bridge drooped between the tower and the central spire. Grundar reached the light metal of the planks first, dragged on by the ferocious insistence of the wolf pack.

Looking back, Krom could see the hazy silhouettes of the Blood Claws leaping from the spire. In the low gravity of the hive world, their bounding steps took them far across the open space between the towers of the Eyriax. Krom lost the

Blood Claws as they dropped through the clouds. The Wolf Lord knew that as the Space Wolves hit the tower lower down they would sink their gauntlets into the elaborate architecture and latch on. Then they would scramble up the side of the spire and surprise Sathar the Unbound from below.

Krom and Grundar ran, the wolves snapping ahead of them on adamantium chains. The walkway led them up onto another spire platform and in through the glorious, gothic antechambers of the planetary governor's palace. The outlying spires through which the Space Wolves had worked their way had been largely deserted. The ruling elite of the tower top villas and palaces had abandoned the musty grandeur of their homes to pillaging servants and exotic pets left to pick over the food of their banquet tables.

Before they had reached these ostentatious dwellings, Krom and his Drakeslayers had moved up through the industrial sectors and rancid habs of the capital hive. There the Space Wolves had encountered mayhem. Sectors in full riot. Manufactorums ablaze. Hivers screaming for lost friends and family members. The city was alive with reports of stalking monsters, things of claw and fury that tore hivers apart. As Krom and his Drakeslayers moved up through the levels in pursuit of Sathar, the Space Wolves received no warm welcome. Workers in rubber suits and underworld wretches in rags and tattoos ran from the sight of the Space Wolves in their imposing grey plate. Grundar had questioned such behaviour but Krom had put the reaction down to the presence of the Chaos Space Marine and his compatriots.

The havoc that afflicted the capital hive had not been restricted to the riots and butchery of the underhive and mid-levels. The villas and palaces of the high and the mighty had been affected also. Unlike the hivers far below them, the planetary governor of Stratovass Ultra and his inbred kindred could leave and seek sanctuary in nearby hives. As Krom moved through the decimated door of a banquet hall, he got a taste of what the hive nobility had left behind.

As the two Space Wolves moved through the governor's palace with its dust-thick halls and ghastly décor, Krom's nose detected the coppery tang of death on the air, the unmistakable smell of slaughter. Grundar's wolves picked up on it also, dragging him along on their unbreakable chains.

The air in the hall was thick with a red mist. Walls, paintings and tapestries were splattered with gore. The floor was slick with blood, while mounds of bodies and body parts sat like small islands in a sea of gore. Rusted chains crisscrossed the floor, with manacles still attached to hands and arms that were no longer connected to torsos. Krom was no stranger to slaughter, much at his own

hand. He was a Space Wolf, one of the Emperor's executioners. But this was something else. The huge hall had been full of people. They had not been killed out of necessity with bolt and blade. They had not even been sacrificed with cultish ceremony. They had been savaged. Torn limb from limb. The chamber had the feeling of an agriworld abattoir: the rawness of blood and fresh meat was overpowering. Krom licked his dry lips. He tasted the death that waited for him there.

'Grundar,' Krom said as the wolf pack nuzzled their way around the piles of mutilated corpses and across the bloody expanse of the banquet hall floor. Grundar Greymane looked about him.

'The doors were locked and reinforced from the outside,' the Space Wolf said, confirming what Krom was thinking. He cast his gaze across the bodies in their ragged, gore-soaked clothing. 'The chains. Hivers imprisoned in the palace halls. Some kind of ritual perhaps?'

Krom had encountered many false prophets and Chaos cults on myriad doomed worlds. He had interrupted dread ceremonies where bloody sacrifices had been used to bring forth monstrosities from the beyond. This did not seem to match those experiences.

'Where's the paraphernalia? The faithless heretics who would benefit from such dark arts?' Krom asked.

Grundar hauled back on the chains of the drooling wolves and moved a dismembered arm over with the tip of his boot. Mind-aching symbols and scripture were carved into the skin of the ragged limb.

'Perhaps they brought forth an abomination that wreaked havoc upon those that summoned it,' Grundar hypothesised.

Krom took in the slaughter.

'No,' the Wolf Lord said finally. 'The doors were barred from the outside. Whether these wretches were meant for sacrifice or not, I don't think they got that far. No summoning took place. Something else got to them first.'

'You can bet the Interrogator-Chaplain's quarry or his accursed allies are behind this,' Grundar said, before his wolves began pulling on their chains and barking furiously. Their sudden savagery was turned on the end of the chamber where the hall opened up into a balconied area where banqueters would have once talked and relaxed after their meals.

'My lord,' Grundar said, responding to the animals' ire.

Krom already had his bolt pistol clutched in one grey gauntlet. At the wolves' warning, he quickly drew Wyrmlaw. The glazed blades of the frost axe

reflected the red of its bloody surroundings.

Suddenly the light from the balcony died. An armoured figure had landed, a silhouette against the bleak mist, the figure's rippling cloak and bat's wings filling the opening. It was the Interrogator-Chaplain's quarry: Sathar the Undone, the heretic Krom and his Drakeslayers had hunted up through the Eyriax hive. The traitor had embraced his darkness indeed. As a silhouette he cut a figure of ragged ruin. Sathar bled danger and a rank-hearted confidence into the air. His plate was a thing of twisted beauty, buried in a hood and robes that cloaked the monster's dread presence.

Grundar and Krom's pistols came up as snarls crossed their faces.

'Stay where you are,' Grundar Greymane barked as he struggled to hold back the ravenous pack on their adamantium chains, 'or I'll blow you in half.'

Like Sathar, Krom knew this to be an empty threat. They were to hunt down and take the traitor alive for Brother Balthus. Even to the Space Wolves, the Chaos Space Marine was much more valuable alive. He might be able to tell them much of the Great Wolf's location and activities in this dismal corner of the galaxy.

The traitor retracted his wings and rose from his landing crouch. In his hands he held the unwieldy length of a crusader's blade. With dark confidence, Sathar walked towards them. Grundar leaned into his aim.

'I mean it,' the Space Wolf told him through gritted teeth.

Krom stared at Sathar the Undone as he entered the hall. Turning from silhouette to an advancing menace, the Wolf Lord could see that their quarry was much twisted by Chaos. His cloak was a withered patchwork of flayed skin, while his wings were in fact scaled like those of a mythological serpent.

Krom slipped his pistol back into its holster and laid a gauntlet on Grundar's arm, prompting the Space Wolf to lower his own weapon. Sathar took his imposing blade in two hands and began to move the length of the sword about him in practised movements. The Wolf Lord felt bile rise up the back of his throat. He wanted nothing more than to allow Grundar to blast the heretic back off the balcony or to cleave him in two himself with Wyrmeclaw. The arrogant traitor had led them on a pointless chase. He had evaded the Blood Claws, who were perhaps still climbing up to intercept him. He must have eluded Brother Balthus, and now he had intercepted Grundar and Krom when they were attempting to do the very same thing to him.

Krom would make him pay for such hubris. He readied his frost axe, taking several experimental swings. Sathar the Undone needn't have arms or legs to

repent his transgressions to Brother Balthus or provide the Space Wolves with information.

‘So you are the wolf that’s been snapping at my heels,’ Sathar said, his voice like a snake’s belly across the sands.

‘And you are the traitorous wretch whose stench we have been tracking,’ Krom returned.

‘If Balthus has engaged the assistance of the VI Legion, then his standards must have fallen,’ the traitor said.

‘Speak not to me of who has fallen, heretic,’ Krom growled. He tipped the head of his axe at the slaughter that surrounded them.

The accusation produced a nasty chuckle from Sathar the Undone.

‘You think this was me?’ he asked. ‘I’m here to halt the progress of this mindless barbarity. That’s why I left my brothers in waiting.’

The mounds of dead flesh either side of the Space Wolves began to tremble and collapse. Butchered torsos, heads and dismembered limbs tumbled down as the armoured figures hidden beneath rose. Krom turned and Grundar with him. The wolves went mad, snapping and drooling at the hidden warriors. Boltguns came up as the figures shrugged off the gore. The blue-green of their monstrous plate ran black with blood. Krom waved the blade of his axe from one foe to another, holding them in his sights.

‘Drop it,’ an Alpha Legionnaire hissed, stepping forward through the dead. Krom looked around at the Chaos Space Marines.

Sathar nodded at Krom.

‘Do it, Wolf,’ Sathar told him.

‘You heard him,’ Krom said to Grundar Greymane, as he placed Wyrmlaw carefully on the floor. ‘Drop it.’

As Grundar released the chains of the beasts in his charge, the wolf pack surged away. Leaping in all directions, the wolves tore at the Alpha Legionnaires. Bolters thundered and the beasts of Fenris snarled. Wolves died, blasted back and torn apart by bolter fire. Others rattled their teeth and claws against cursed ceramite before being battered aside. Krom Dragongaze’s reflexes were no less swift than the ferocious beasts. Grabbing Wyrmlaw, he brought the frost axe around with sudden violence, stepping over the body of a blasted wolf. Chopping down, he turned the boltgun of the Alpha Legionnaire who had issued him orders into a cascade of shattered parts. Grabbing the shaft of the axe, Krom pivoted the weapon around and smashed it into the warped detailing of the Legionnaire’s faceplate. Following the turn around, Krom

smashed the axe blade through the helm, leaving an arc of gore in its path.

Assailed by wolves on all sides, the Alpha Legionnaires sent bursts of fire wide. With streams of bolt rounds blazing through the bloody haze of the banquet hall, Grundar picked up his bolt pistol. Hammering bolts into the chest and faceplate of the nearest Legionnaires, the Space Wolf crouched below streams of gunfire meant to blow his head from his shoulders. A Chaos Space Marine grabbed him suddenly from behind, seizing him in an expert hold. The final bolt rounds of his pistol blasted into the marble of banquet hall pillars. Grundar saw a knife flash before him, the Legionnaire aiming to slice the Space Wolf's throat. Growling as much to himself as his attacker, Grundar fought like an animal, tearing at his foe's plate and arms. While the Alpha Legion warrior adapted his powered hold, moving with elegant determination between death-dealing techniques, Grundar simply relied upon the rage of the animal inside him.

Ripping and clawing at the Legionnaire with his gauntlets, Grundar turned within his enemy's grasp. Prising his arms free, the Space Wolf tore the serpent-styled helm from the Legionnaire's face. His dead reptilian eyes burned with some inner corruption. The Alpha Legionnaire benefitted from expert training and was a master of martial invention. He had an elongated lifetime of battle experience and the boon of some darkness at work within him. He could have killed Grundar a thousand different ways. Trapped in the Legionnaire's hold and with a blade slicing for his throat, the Space Wolf knew only one.

Instead of pulling away, Grundar lunged for the Legionnaire. Holding him by the warped stylisations of his breastplate, Grundar heaved him in close. Opening his mouth, his sharpened teeth glistening, the Space Wolf tore the Legionnaire's throat out with a single, disgusted bite. Allowing the Alpha Legion warrior to crash to his knees, Grundar stumbled back, spitting gore from his blood-spattered lips.

With the thunder of boltfire echoing about the hall, Krom smashed a blazing weapon aside with Wyrmeclaw. Heaving the frost axe with the firing fibre bundles of his powered plate, the Wolf Lord chopped down through a Legionnaire's chest. Turning with lupine grace, Krom dodged the furious blast of a boltgun as another Legionnaire advanced with his weapon tucked into his pauldron. The frost axe came around, smashing the Chaos Space Marine's weapon from his hands. Whirling about, Krom buried the blade in the Alpha Legionnaire's head.

Krom ducked as a final Legionnaire came up behind to smash the butt of his

boltgun down on the Space Wolf. Krom crashed down onto his armoured knees, dragging the axe and the corpse in which it was embedded with him. Savagely jabbing the axe hilt back, Krom cracked the plate of his attacker in the midriff. Pivoting on one knee, the Wolf Lord hacked at the Legionnaire's leg. The Chaos Space Marine dropped his weapon and reached down for the grievous wound but Krom completed the cut with another chop through the knee.

As the Alpha Legionnaire fell, Krom rose from the bloody floor. Staggering, he reached out for a pillar to steady himself. He saw Sathar the Undone swing the tapering length of his crusader sword, cutting one bounding wolf out of the air before splitting another in half. The keen blade slipped through the fur and lean Fenrisian meat, silencing the beast's roar. Krom continued where the animal had left off, a roar building in his chest. He pointed the blade of his frost axe at the traitor before pushing himself away from the pillar. Stomping his way into a run, with blood splashing about his footfalls, Krom launched himself at Sathar the Undone. Stamping up a mound of bodies, the Wolf Lord jumped – taking full advantage of the hive world's low gravity. Bringing the axe down on the renegade, Krom felt a bone-rattling jar pass through his body as Sathar brought up the length of his crusader blade to meet his blow.

The traitor heaved back at Krom, prompting the pair to circle each other with powered steps. The optics of Sathar's helm burned into the Space Wolf, while Krom returned the stare with the piercing gold of his eye. The Wolf Lord snarled his intention to annihilate his opponent while Sathar was calm, his exertions resulting in a helm-grille hiss. Simultaneously, they launched their attacks.

The differing fighting styles of the two combatants made for awkward and uneasy combat. Krom hacked and wheeled about with Wurmclaw, attempting to rake through armour and slash his enemy to ribbons. It was savage and instinctive: the unleashing of the beast within. Sathar, conversely, moved with practised sweeps of his long blade. With a knightly martial elegance, he propelled the blade about him, or held it aloft to absorb the frost axe's savage blows. He thrust and stabbed with the length of the blade, using it like a spear to weave through Krom's defences. As the Space Wolf heaved, chopped and smashed at Sathar in a fury, the tapering tip of the renegade's blade punctured plate and flesh, striping the grey of the Wolf Lord's armour with the red leakage of fresh wounds.

Krom brought Wurmclaw down on the Chaos Space Marine's blade and fancied the weapon creaked. Heaving down on the haft of the frost axe, the Wolf Lord leant in, baring his teeth at Sathar's faceplate. The traitor held him there,

however, the crusader blade trapped between them. Pushing Krom back, Sathar whipped the weapon around with serpentine speed and determination. As Krom came straight back at him, the sword was ready – surging forward to skewer the Space Wolf. Krom was ready too. With blistering savagery, he backslashed the oncoming blade aside, smashing his axe blade through the weakened section of metal.

The crusader sword shattered, prompting Sathar the Undone to stagger back in surprise. Krom would not relent, however, and stamped out, burying the sole of his armoured boot in the traitor's gut. Krom heaved his axe over his head and down at Sathar, who just managed to get the remains of his blade and its crossguard between him and the descending Wyrmlaw. The two held each other there for a moment – still, like statues.

'No!' Grundar Greymane roared as a staccato of bolt rounds hammered into his Wolf Lord. The shock and surprise registered on Krom's snarling face almost immediately. He had taken the shot in his side, the pipes and lines of his armoured midriff a sparking mess. As his arms and plate faltered for a moment, he looked down to see the Alpha Legionnaire whose leg he had hacked off still on the floor. The Chaos Space Marine had reached for his boltgun and in agony aimed it up at Krom from the floor. The Legionnaire was dead seconds later as Grundar ran at him, bringing his boot down barbarically on the back of the Chaos Space Marine's head and snapping his neck.

The murderous strength behind Wyrmlaw was lost for a second and Sathar pushed the weapon back. It gave the renegade just enough room and opportunity to withdraw the wicked remnant of his blade and thrust it at the surprised Wolf Lord like a dagger.

The shattered, stabbing stump of the blade scraped the Wolf Lord's breastplate and would have pierced his hearts had it not been for Grundar Greymane's thundering advance. Stamping through the carnage of slain Legionnaires, butchered wolves and hiver corpses, Grundar hammered into Sathar. Getting a gauntlet to the traitor's armoured wrist, the Space Wolf interrupted the deadly advance of the shattered blade and tore it away from its path of murderous destruction. The Chaos Space Marine was knocked back by the Space Wolf cannoning into him and it was all Krom Dragongaze could do to clutch his bolt-blasted side and watch Grundar knock Sathar the Undone through the stone of the balcony balustrade. Seconds later the pair were gone, wrangling with each other in a death grip and falling from the edge.

Clutching the rawness of his injured side, Krom staggered over to the ruined

balustrade and peered down through the clouds. He searched for Grundar Greymane and their sworn enemy but the clouds had swallowed them as they plummeted through the spire heights.

Out of the haze about the tower, Krom saw figures appear. Blood Claws, leaping from the opposing spire where they had failed to find Sathar the Undone. They clawed for purchase on the busy architecture of the palace walls, holding there for further orders as the remainder of their number sailed across the open space.

Bent double over the demolished balustrade and peering down over the edge of the balcony, Krom heard footsteps coming up behind. In agony, the Wolf Lord hauled himself up and around to meet the threat but found Interrogator-Chaplain Balthus working his way through the slaughter. The Dark Angel looked down at the bodies of the Chaos Space Marines.

‘Where have you been?’ Krom demanded.

‘I was searching for him in the mist,’ Balthus replied.

There was something in the Interrogator-Chaplain’s tone that gave Krom pause. Balthus had proved himself honourable time and again, and yet... Krom could read nothing in the blank skull helm that stared back at him.

‘Well, you were wasting your time looking out there,’ Krom snarled.

‘You had him?’

‘Had him,’ Krom confirmed, ‘and lost him.’

As he approached, Balthus nodded down at Krom’s stomach wound.

‘You’re injured,’ the Dark Angel said.

‘I’ll live,’ Krom assured him, looking over the balcony. He grunted. ‘I’m not sure I can say the same for the traitor you hunt.’

Grundar Greymane tumbled down through the cloud. He clawed at his foe, tearing at his cloak of flayed flesh. They fell past the rushing blur of over-elaborate architecture. Stratovass Ultra might have been a low gravity world but it still *had* gravity – enough to drag the Space Wolf at increasing speed towards the splattering embrace of the rockrete surface.

Suddenly, the whooshing obscurity of the cloud became a storm of whipping lines and cables. Cords snapped and lines slashed about Grundar’s armoured form. As he hit the metal of a support line he abruptly stopped. Plate crumpled and the air was knocked out of his lungs. Falling to one side, the Space Wolf plummeted through a further net of cords and cables stretching between the palace tower and sub-spires.

Sathar the Undone was torn from his grasp, the traitor tangled in the lines. With the fingers of his gauntlet grasping for his enemy, Grundar plunged away. The irregular outline of the tower seemed to reach out for him: vanes, statues and balconies. He smashed down through the stone of an ornamental bridge and punched a hole through decorative banners advertising the ancient Houses of the Eyriax Hive.

The lines and wind-lashed banners did enough to break Grundar's fall that when he hit the roof of a sub-spire, the Space Wolf merely crashed through the crumbling tiles, bouncing off the metal bracings of the superstructure. With smashed plate and bones, Grundar rolled off the steep tower roof and once more found himself plummeting.

The fall was short-lived, however. With a grunt of agony, the Space Wolf hammered into the marble of a balcony floor. With the stone shattered beneath him like a tessellation, Grundar rolled onto his chest. He found it difficult to breathe, his black carapace and ribs broken.

The Space Wolf had fallen back into the central spire. He was confident of that. The balcony of another great hall – one of many in the labyrinthine grandeur of the hive palace. Blurred vision began to focus to a grim crispness. There was movement. A multitude in motion. Sound that hurt Grundar's sensitive ears. Groaning. Screaming. The horror of death, shrieked seconds before the fact. The Space Wolf's nose also picked out the pungency of sweat and fear. The sharp tang of blood spilled. The rawness of flesh ripped open.

The hall was a cacophony of panic and slaughter. Like the chambers above it was crowded with victims. They jangled with chains that prevented them from running. They fled in confusion and dread, each in their own direction before being torn back by the restrictions of their shackles. The whites of their eyes and the frantic futility of their movements told of their terror. The cultish symbols freshly carved into their hive-grimy flesh was evidence of the sacrificial horror to come.

Then Grundar heard it. Something harsh and half-remembered. A sound that called out to the animal part of him. The monstrous part of him. The part that was Russ. Like a tsunami of gore, blood fountained for the hall's high ceiling as unseen abominations moved through the sacrificial throng. Chains were slashed and victims snatched up before being thrown through the air. Heads spun off in whirls of blood.

Grundar imagined some of the horrors he had faced in his long service to the Allfather. Xenos abominations. Chaos Space Marines twisted into monstrosities.

Daemonic entities crafted of infernal whim. As the slaughter moved towards Grundar, the Space Wolf tried his vox-link.

‘Greymane to command,’ he hissed with effort. ‘Come in.’

The channel was silent. It was not a good sign. ‘Greymane to command. Lord Dragongaze, receive.’

Like everything else about the suit of powered armour, the vox-link was smashed. Then he saw it. As a throng of terrified hivers were turned to chum before his eyes, an armoured figure ventured forth from the bloodbath. Grundar Greymane’s hearts leapt at the sight of grey plate and the sigil of the wolf’s head, proudly displayed on a gore-spattered pauldron. Hunched like some wild beast burdened by its own savage nature, the creature wore neither helm nor gauntlets. It was as if its plate was a remnant of a forgotten age, unable to contain the animal fury within it. Its hands were dripping grappels of blood-matted fur and wicked claws. The thing’s maw was crowded with blood-stained fangs and its facial hair slick with gore.

Grundar searched for some scintilla of humanity in its rage-bright eyes. Some flicker of nobility or recognition. He failed to find it. Grundar, however, recognised his brother-beast. By his grey plate, caked black with old gore. By the legionary sigils that still adorned its armour. By the curse that drove mind and flesh to acts of animal barbarism. By the features of Russ, worn like a mask over the rage of a monster unbound. Unbridled. Unstoppable.

It saw him. Grundar Greymane, Son of Russ and proud wolf of Fenris. Reflected in the burning urgency of the monstrosity’s eyes, he was a victim, taunting the beast with breath and pulse. He was flesh to be torn with tooth and claw. Gore to be adorned. A thing to be savaged.

‘Brother...’ Grundar Greymane managed. He knew his killer. The Space Wolves knew them as the Wulfen. Lost brothers bearing the genetic curse that made them more beast than man. The sacrificial slaves that had been assembled in the palace of the planetary governor might have been intended for some bloody ceremony orchestrated by Sathar the Undone and the Alpha Legion. They had found their terrible end not at the edge of a heretic’s blade or some monstrous abomination brought forth by the warp. No – the wretched hivers had come to know death sudden and savage, by fangs that slashed open their throats and claws that ripped through their torsos.

‘Brother–’

It was too late. The Wulfen was upon him. Not one but several creatures. Tearing. Raging. Roaring. Grundar’s smashed plate was nothing before their

ferocity. His fraternal flesh was a site of frenzied butchery.

And then it was over. The horrific sound of his torso being ripped apart was gone, as was the thrash of jaws. The Wulfen were gone, launching themselves back into the terror and bedlam of the main massacre.

Grundar lay there. His face was awash with his own blood. His innards – mulched and shredded – decorated his savaged form. His mind faded. He drifted down into the darkness of encroaching death. The surrounding butchery became nothing as the Space Wolf was acquainted with the intimacy of his end.

‘Greymane, this is command,’ the Space Wolf’s vox fizzled. It was Krom Dragongaze. ‘Grundar, where are you?’

Grundar tried to speak. To form at least one word. A word with which to warn his Fenrisian brothers of the horror to come. To tell his Wolf Lord that Wulfen were there on Stratovass Ultra. ‘Greymane, please respond.’

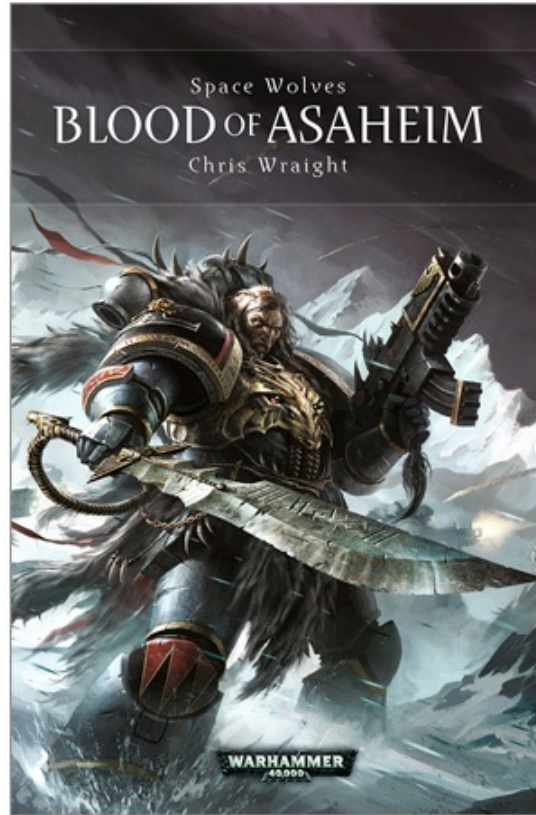
The mangled lips of the Space Wolf’s slashed face could not form the sounds. The warning burned within Grundar’s mind but his torn throat and his mouth full of blood would not answer. With such failure afflicting his shredded hearts and Krom’s words in his ears, Grundar Greymane let the darkness take him.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rob Sanders is the author of *The Serpent Beneath*, a novella that appeared in the New York Times bestselling Horus Heresy anthology *The Primarchs*.

His other Black Library credits include the Warhammer 40,000 titles *Adeptus Mechanicus: Skitarius* and *Tech-Priest*, *Legion of the Damned*, *Atlas Infernal* and *Redemption Corps* and the audio drama *The Path Forsaken*. He has also written the Warhammer Archaon duology, *Everchosen* and *Lord of Chaos* along with many Quick Reads for the Horus Heresy and Warhammer 40,000. He lives in the city of Lincoln, UK.

[A Space Wolves pack defends a vital Imperial world from the forces of the Plague Lord](#)



[BUY NOW](#)



READ IT FIRST

EXCLUSIVE PRODUCTS | EARLY RELEASES | FREE DELIVERY

blacklibrary.com

THE BLACK LIBRARY NEWSLETTER



**Sign up today for regular updates on the
latest Black Library news and releases**

SIGN UP NOW

A BLACK LIBRARY PUBLICATION

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

Produced by Games Workshop in Nottingham.

Legends of the Dark Millennium: Space Wolves – The Wolf Within ©
Copyright Games Workshop Limited 2015. Legends of the Dark
Millennium: Space Wolves – The Wolf Within, Legends of the Dark
Millennium, GW, Games Workshop, Black Library, The Horus Heresy, The
Horus Heresy Eye logo, Space Marine, 40K, Warhammer, Warhammer
40,000, the ‘Aquila’ Double-headed Eagle logo, and all associated logos,
illustrations, images, names, creatures, races, vehicles, locations, weapons,
characters, and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are either ® or TM, and/or
© Games Workshop Limited, variably registered around the world.
All Rights Reserved.

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library.

978-1-78251-950-8

This is a work of fiction. All the characters and events portrayed in this
book are fictional, and any resemblance to real people or incidents is purely
coincidental.

See Black Library on the internet at
blacklibrary.com

Find out more about Games Workshop’s world of Warhammer and the
Warhammer 40,000 universe at
games-workshop.com

eBook license

This license is made between:

Games Workshop Limited t/a Black Library, Willow Road, Lenton, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, United Kingdom (“Black Library”); and

(2) the purchaser of an e-book product from Black Library website (“You/you/Your/your”)

(jointly, “the parties”)

These are the terms and conditions that apply when you purchase an e-book (“e-book”) from Black Library. The parties agree that in consideration of the fee paid by you, Black Library grants you a license to use the e-book on the following terms:

* 1. Black Library grants to you a personal, non-exclusive, non-transferable, royalty-free license to use the e-book in the following ways:

o 1.1 to store the e-book on any number of electronic devices and/or storage media (including, by way of example only, personal computers, e-book readers, mobile phones, portable hard drives, USB flash drives, CDs or DVDs) which are personally owned by you;

o 1.2 to access the e-book using an appropriate electronic device and/or through any appropriate storage media; and

* 2. For the avoidance of doubt, you are ONLY licensed to use the e-book as described in paragraph 1 above. You may NOT use or store the e-book in any other way. If you do, Black Library shall be entitled to terminate this license.

* 3. Further to the general restriction at paragraph 2, Black Library shall be entitled to terminate this license in the event that you use or store the e-book (or any part of it) in any way not expressly licensed. This includes (but is by no means limited to) the following circumstances:

o 3.1 you provide the e-book to any company, individual or other legal person who does not possess a license to use or store it;

o 3.2 you make the e-book available on bit-torrent sites, or are otherwise complicit in ‘seeding’ or sharing the e-book with any company, individual or other legal person who does not possess a license to use or store it;

o 3.3 you print and distribute hard copies of the e-book to any company, individual or other legal person who does not possess a license to use or store it;

o 3.4 you attempt to reverse engineer, bypass, alter, amend, remove or otherwise make any change to any copy protection technology which may be applied to the e-book.

* 4. By purchasing an e-book, you agree for the purposes of the Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations 2000 that Black Library may commence the service (of provision of the e-book to you) prior to your ordinary cancellation period coming to an end, and that by purchasing an e-book, your cancellation rights shall end immediately upon receipt of the e-book.

* 5. You acknowledge that all copyright, trademark and other intellectual property rights in the e-book are, shall remain, the sole property of Black Library.

* 6. On termination of this license, howsoever effected, you shall immediately and permanently delete all copies of the e-book from your computers and storage media, and shall destroy all hard copies of the e-book which you have derived from the e-book.

* 7. Black Library shall be entitled to amend these terms and conditions from time to time by written notice to you.

* 8. These terms and conditions shall be governed by English law, and shall be subject only to the jurisdiction of the Courts in England and Wales.

* 9. If any part of this license is illegal, or becomes illegal as a result of any change in the law, then that part shall be deleted, and replaced with wording that is as close to the original meaning as possible without being illegal.

* 10. Any failure by Black Library to exercise its rights under this license for whatever reason shall not be in any way deemed to be a waiver of its rights, and in particular, Black Library reserves the right at all times to terminate this license in the event that you breach clause 2 or clause 3.