

WARHAMMER 40,000



SPACE WOLVES 7 SCENT OF A TRAITOR

WARHAMMER
40,000



SPACE WOLVES 7
SCENT OF A TRAITOR

SPACE WOLVES

SCENT OF A TRAITOR

C L Werner

The grizzled Wolf Scout leaned close to the wall, his nose half an inch from the grimy surface. His face scrunched back in a bestial grimace as his nostrils flared, taking in the manifold odours of the hive. Lopt Redtooth closed one eye as his mind identified the superfluous smells, separating them from the scent he was hunting for. His other eye, long ago replaced by a bionic mechanism, clicked and whirred as it kept the dimly lit corridor in focus.

Ulrik watched the scout work. Of all Krom's Drakeslayers, it was Lopt who was best suited to this task. He had the instincts of a thunderwolf when it came to following a trail, something more primal than skill and experience could bestow. He had honed his abilities tracking ice trolls through the black caverns beneath Asaheim, bringing back the scaly ears of the monsters as trophies. Unlike the wolves of Fenris, however, Lopt had the mind of a man, able to interpret what he smelled in ways beyond the capacity of any beast. This was why Ulrik had given the duty of following the trail to the scout instead of one of the mighty canines. In this task, intelligence would prove as vital as speed.

Lopt lifted a tiny tube of paper from the ground. It was only the most minute of fragments, crushed and burnt, further stained by the industrial grime that caked the walls of the alley. Ulrik could smell nothing but the smoky residue of charred plant fibres rising from the discarded lho-stick. The Wolf Scout, however, was able to pick through a maze of odours to find the scent hidden underneath.

'The same man,' Lopt said, his bionic eye still prowling the shadowy corridor. 'There's more fear to his scent now. I think he knows he's being hunted.'

Krom Dragongaze grinned at Lopt's words. 'If he knows he's being followed,

he'll go to ground. He'll go where he feels safe.'

Beregelt stroked the fur of the great Fenrisian wolf at his side. He had taken charge of the beasts since their former master, Grundar, had been lost. 'Say the word, and Vangandyr will run the heretic down.' A low growl rattled at the back of the animal's throat, as though it caught the meaning of Beregelt's words and was eager for the hunt.

'Lopt's nose has brought us this far,' Krom said. 'I'd not offer him insult by letting Vangandyr steal his catch.'

Ulrik took the lho-stick from Lopt, turning it over in his armoured hand. There were a dozen Space Wolves ranged along the corridor, with many more spread out through the district. This region of the hive city was a labyrinth of maintenance shafts, service ducts, transport channels and load-paths used by the processing plants and factories to conduct raw materials from the ring of collection centres outside the hive. There was a confusion of walkways, alleys and sneak-tracks that squirmed their way between the hab-blocks and industrial complexes – tier upon tier of trails for the Space Wolves to prowl, rising in successive layers up into the spires some miles above. It was a lot of ground to cover. Formidable as the Drakeslayers were, Ulrik would have welcomed more help.

The Wolf Priest could sense the unease in Krom's words and knew the question the Wolf Lord wanted to ask. The Space Wolves had discovered the trail of their prey when they found the Traitor Space Marine's scent on some hive-serfs. Through Lopt, they had been able to track one of the menials away from the scene of one of the gruesome sacrifices that had been plaguing the hive.

If this hiver were indeed to lead them to the traitor, Sathar, then the Dark Angels would want to be there. After his trail had been lost three days ago, Interrogator-Chaplain Balthus had gone his own way, arguing that they stood a better chance of finding their quarry if they split up. Now that the Space Wolves had picked up this scent, it was Ulrik's duty to let the Chaplain know, but he hesitated.

It seemed that before his escape from their custody, Sathar had learned much about the Dark Angels and their tactics. Familiarity with his hunters was how the traitor had been able to elude the Dark Angels for so long. If Ulrik informed Balthus of the trail they were following then the Dark Angels would demand to lead the pursuit. The traitor would be ready for them and the hunt would be a failure. Ulrik had a duty to his allies, but he felt a greater duty to the Allfather to bring down this traitor. Of equal importance was the information Sathar might

have – there was a good chance that he knew what fate had befallen Logan Grimnar.

Ulrik turned towards Krom. ‘This trail has been given to the Sons of Russ to follow. The burden is upon us. We will share the victory with the Dark Angels, but not the hunt.’

This seemed to satisfy Krom. ‘My other packs will gather on the flanks and run alongside the trail Lopt has found. The prey will not slip past,’ he growled.

‘The hive-serf we track may have been deceived,’ Ulrik cautioned the Wolf Lord. ‘It may be that our quarry is innocent of treachery. Keep that in mind.’ The last was spoken with emphasis, his voice carrying to the Space Wolves further down the corridor. They had an obligation to defend the Allfather’s servants. It would taint the glory of their purpose should they allow innocent blood to stain their tracks. Ulrik suspected that the Dark Angels wouldn’t be so reserved in their own methods.

At a gesture from Krom, Lopt hurried along the alleyway. The Wolf Scout seldom paused to examine his surroundings now, more certain of the trail since finding the lho-stick. When the path ascended up gantries or dropped into service tunnels, Lopt gave voice to a quick bark to alert the rest of the pack, then swiftly pursued the scent.

In a short time, a low snarl sounded across the vox. Ulrik recognised the distinct pattern of Lopt’s voice. The meaning was clear. The Wolf Scout had cornered the hive-serf.

‘My warriors will cordon off the area,’ Krom told Ulrik. ‘We’ll hold on to anybody who even thinks about leaving.’

A menacing growl rose from Vangandyr.

‘I don’t think any runners will get far,’ Beregelt said, tightening his hold on the wolf’s chain.

Ulrik nodded. Though a Space Wolf could stalk doppegangrels and ice wyrms across the tundra with the stealth of a snow panther, the bowels of a hive city weren’t ideal for stealthy manoeuvres. The hab-blocks around them were teeming with inhabitants and the presence of dozens of giant warriors of the Adeptus Astartes wasn’t something that could be hidden from them. The hive-serfs knew the Space Wolves were there, and that knowledge had sent them cowering inside their hab-units. Any that emerged from hiding now would only be those with some vital purpose. Those perhaps seeking to warn their dark master.

The snarl of small arms fire rang out from around the bend. Lopt barked a hasty

warning over the vox, then fell silent. Ulrik could pick out the distinct report of the scout's bolt pistol mixed into the chatter of stubbers and shotguns. The Wolf Priest drew his plasma pistol and glanced over at Krom. The Wolf Lord was already motioning his retinue to spread out in support of Lopt.

'Looks like the serf stopped running,' Krom growled, fangs gleaming in a fierce smile.

'Try to take him alive,' Ulrik advised.

Like grey shadows, the Space Wolves fanned out. Beregelt led Vangandyr down an alleyway, two other Wolf Guard climbed up into a maintenance gantry and another pair rushed along a side street. Krom led the last of his retinue in a charge directly towards the sounds of combat. Ulrik followed the Wolf Lord's course.

The ambush had caught Lopt at the junction of three streets, a broad ramp at one end of the crossroad rising up into the next layer of the hive city. The fugitive he'd been tracking must have slipped word to comrades somewhere along the trail, and it was here that the hivers had decided to spring their trap. Converging upon the scout from three sides, the mob had forced the Space Wolf to take cover behind one of the plasteel columns supporting the rampway. From this improvised fortification, Lopt was delivering staggered fire. He was careful to shoot just enough to keep the mob back, but restrained himself from inflicting enough casualties to send the ambushers into flight. His purpose was to keep them right where they were until the rest of the Drakeslayers could secure the area and cut off any avenue of retreat.

A fierce, booming howl thundered from the Space Wolves as they rushed into the junction. The ambushers, a motley mixture of drab hive-serfs and garish gangers, were thrown into confusion as the huge power-armoured warriors charged towards them.

'Strength is honour!' a tattooed ganger shrieked as he spun around and aimed a snub-nosed stubber at Krom. Before the man could shoot, Krom's pistol barked, the shot ripping through the ganger's knee and hurling his maimed body out into the street.

The mutilation of their spokesman set the rest of the mob into furious retaliation. Men dashed out from behind pillars and pipes to blaze away at the Space Wolves with shotguns and pistols. One, wearing nothing but a breechcloth and a crazed grin, charged at them with a massive chainsword clenched in his fists. From a nest of conduits and pipes overhead, a man swathed in a dark cassock sniped at the Drakeslayers with a lasrifle. Darting about the edge of the

ramp, a pair of burly ruffians in the coveralls of factory workers lobbed firebombs at the Wolf Guard.

Bullets and solid slugs clattered harmlessly from the thick ceramite armour. A sweep of Ulrik's crozius disarmed the ganger with the chainsword, leaving the mangled hiver screaming in a pool of his own blood. A burst from Krom's pistol brought the sniper crashing down from his nest above the junction. Wading through the pools of flame left by the firebombs, the Space Wolves pushed their assault against the mob.

'Strength is honour! I shall be worthy!' The cry was accompanied by a searing surge of flame that went sizzling past Ulrik's shoulder. One of the Drakeslayers cried out, dropping back as he was engulfed by a torrent of flames.

Ulrik sprang towards the hiver with the flamer. He was a brawny man, his muscles swollen with chem stimulants. There was a latticework of tattoos covering his face, a writhing mixture of swords and snakes entwined around an aquila. There was a vicious gleam in the thug's eyes, the look of a cornered ice-vermin that fights despite its fear because it knows it has no other choice. Ulrik could see his opponent trying to discharge another blast of flame, but the weapon was sputtering.

'Submit to the Allfather's justice,' Ulrik warned, swatting the flamer from the hiver's hands with his crozius. 'Repent and you may find mercy.'

Terror transfixed the hiver's visage as he stared up into the Helm of Russ. 'I shall be worthy,' he almost sobbed, reaching a hand to his neck. Ulrik just had time to spring away before the hiver detonated the grenade hanging from his necklace. The brunt of the explosion caught him in the shoulder, sending him sprawling in the middle of the street.

Ulrik started to rise, but was struck from behind. Looming above him was an enormous ganger, nearly as large as a Space Marine. The filth of mutation disfigured the man's body, lending him an idiot expression as well as a prodigious musculature. The mutant held a plasteel girder in his hands and as the Wolf Priest tried to stand, the ganger brought the bludgeon down again. As his head bounced against the street, Ulrik could see several hivers rushing towards him to take advantage of his distress.

'Only strong is worthy,' the mutant dullard slurred as he brought the girder crashing down again.

'You aren't strong,' Ulrik snarled back. The old Wolf swept his leg underneath the mutant's, pitching his foe to the ground. A kick of his boot smashed the ganger's face and a blow from his maul pulverized the man's left arm. Ulrik left

the groaning wreckage and turned to face the pack of hivers coming for him, only to see that they had already been intercepted. Emerging from an alleyway, the huge bulk of Vangandyr smashed into the men. The gigantic wolf locked its jaws around one hiver's leg, tossing him aside with a twist of its head, then spun around to crush another man beneath its lupine bulk. Beregelt wasn't far behind, his fire discouraging those the animal had failed to send fleeing.

The ambush had been turned upon itself. With more Drakeslayers converging on the position, none of the mob would escape. When it came time to interrogate those they captured, however, Ulrik found there was little they could tell him that he didn't already suspect. Sathar had preyed upon the hivers, pressing them into a cult of his own creation. Hive-serfs from the factories and gangers from the underbelly of Eyriax had been drawn into the traitor's service, acting as his eyes and ears within the city in exchange for the protection and power he promised them.

The one detail that did interest Ulrik was how the hivers relayed information back to their master. They communicated by passing intelligence through Ecclesiarch collectioners, laymen who prowled the hab-blocks seeking contributions for the endowment of shrines and temples.

The Space Wolves looked more closely at the sniper Krom had brought down from the ceiling. Lopt bent over the body, sniffing at the monk-like cassock. His face wrinkled in distaste at the pungent reek clinging to the robes. There was a greasy mix of incense and promethium so prominent as to almost blot out the man's own scent.

Ulrik nodded as the Wolf Scout gave his report. There was one place in particular where such a curious combination of smells could be expected. A snarl rattled at the back of his throat as he considered the audacity of the traitor to conceal himself in the very shadow of the Allfather.

Ponderous in its dimensions, the crematorium was an incongruous medley of temple and factory, a place where the dead of Eyriax were brought for final disposal, and where mourners came to pay their last respects. Bronze iconography a hundred feet wide adorned the outer walls, displaying the symbols of the Ecclesiarchy and scriptures from the Imperial Creed. Statues of saints and martyrs stood within niches cut above each doorway, their granite faces slowly crumbling beneath a patina of soot and industrial grime. Great vents in the roof spewed a greasy grey smog into the air, a mixture of fuel and incense with a strong undercurrent of burning flesh. A steady flow of load-carriers drove around

the immense structure, bearing stacks of metal caskets to the receiving bays at the back of the building.

Ulrik didn't need to see the Drakeslayers to know that they were moving into position. He could *feel* them all around, could smell their eagerness, hear the impatience in their breath. Krom had dispatched them to cover every approach to the target, not leaving so much as a maintenance hatch without a team of Space Wolves ready and waiting to smash it open.

'Inside will reek,' Krom reminded Ulrik. The Wolf Lord held his grey helmet in one hand, contemplating it with a calculating eye. 'The wolves will be utterly overcome by the stink. We'll have to leave them out here. I've ordered the Drakeslayers with the sharpest noses to stay with them and to act as reserve. They'll be more use out here keeping guard than they will inside. If our prey slips through, they'll be ready to pick up his trail.'

'You give this traitor a great deal of credit,' Ulrik said.

Krom laughed. 'He's managed to evade the Dark Angels for a long time. That makes him better than them. Although it doesn't mean he's as good as a Space Wolf.'

At Krom's command, the Drakeslayers mounted their assault. The doors and hatches fronting the building crumpled under the armoured boots and whirring chainswords of the Space Marines. Howling their battle cries, the giant warriors surged into the crematorium.

Krom's Wolf Guard smashed the ornate double doors of the main entryway. Ulrik rushed into the wide reception hall beyond, stunning the robed attendants inside by the abrupt violence of his entrance. Crying out in shock, their faces transfixed by a mix of awe and terror, the men prostrated themselves before the black-armoured Wolf Priest. In their quivering babble, he could hear appeals to the God-Emperor for protection and forgiveness. Briefly Ulrik wondered if their imprecations were sincere or if these men were also minions of Sathar. The Space Marines following behind Ulrik swept past the shivering attendants, sparing them small notice as they pursued the sounds of activity beyond the hall.

A thrill rushed through Ulrik's veins, the primal eagerness and anticipation of battle that had been with him ever since he was a Blood Claw. The sensation was dulled beneath the layers of restraint and experience he'd acquired over his many centuries of service to the Chapter. Impulsiveness and instinct didn't control him. They were tools, assets to be tapped into and focused towards the objective at hand.

Sathar the Undone. Ulrik's lips curled back in a snarl as he contemplated their

prey. He could still remember Svane Vulfbad, the turn-pelt renegade who'd betrayed the Space Wolves and taken much of his Great Company down the path of Chaos. It was easy to appreciate how fiercely the Dark Angels despised traitors. Yet their hate hadn't been enough to catch their enemy, any more than the Space Wolves had been able to visit justice upon Vulfbad. That was why Ulrik had advised Krom to stage an immediate assault on the crematorium. The Dark Angels might have displayed more caution, waited until they were certain of catching Sathar before committing themselves. That would give the traitor time to prepare. With a sudden assault, Sathar might be caught off-guard.

The Drakeslayers stormed the sanctuaries and chapels that ringed the reception hall. Each chamber was filled with crowds of mourners, come to offer prayers for departed family and friends. Ancient pews groaned under the weight of the sombre throngs while still more hive-serfs stood in the aisles and along the walls to make their representations. Waxen seals affixed to each mourner's forehead proclaimed the serial number of the casket that had received the departed they had come to honour. Scrolls pinned to their sleeves displayed the amount of their contribution to the Ecclesiarchy's coffers to petition a personalised eulogy for the deceased. Behind the stone altar at the fore of each chapel, a lay-priest chanted a litany for the dead, sometimes pausing in his droning chant to utter a special commendation for the spirit of someone whose grieving family had been especially generous in their tithe.

When the Space Wolves intruded upon these chambers, disrupting the mortuary rituals, mourners and lay-priests alike were thrown into alarm and confusion. It took but a single snarled command to send them rushing out into the reception hall and from thence into the streets beyond. Seeing the hurried exodus, Ulrik noted cloaked figures emerging from shadowy alcoves. Obscure and sinister in their aspect, the lurkers made no move to obstruct the Drakeslayers. He could guess their purpose – guards to monitor the funerary ceremonies and report anything suspicious to their dark master. It was likely they'd already informed Sathar that the Wolves had come. The best way they could serve their master now was to delay the Drakeslayers by arousing their suspicions. It would be no small effort to extricate the sentries from the mass of frightened mourners.

'Forget Sathar's rats,' Ulrik voxed the other Space Wolves. 'If we need to find them later, we'll set the wolves on their track. For now we hunt bigger game.'

Behind the crematorium's outer chambers lay the Halls of Eternal Dreaming. The contrast was that of day and night. From the sombre sanctuaries and chapels, the Halls expanded into a vast cavern of machinery, a cathedral of

industry rather than spirit. Rotating belts slithered between great vats and presses. Hooks and mechanical claws swung above, their gruesome talons poised to seize the bodies that were laid out upon the belts. Immense oven-like furnaces squatted at the far end of the hall, flames crackling behind the steel grilles. Huge pipes pumped fuel into the furnaces, drawing promethium and other incendiary chemicals from mammoth tanks clustered about the opposite side of the building. A brigade of pallid servitors shuffled around the machinery and the furnaces. With the aquila branded into their foreheads and their bodies covered in strange cloaks that at once suggested the coverall of a labourer and the cassock of a pilgrim, the servitors were twisted parodies of the human form. Arms replaced with grasping claws of iron, legs substituted for whirring treads of steel, each of the attendants was part machine, programmed to perform his duties with neither complaint nor fatigue. They didn't react even as the first of Krom's Blood Claws came loping into the factory, simply continuing to operate the machinery they had been assigned.

'Damn this incense,' Krom cursed behind his helm. 'It's enough to set the oldest Long Fang on edge!'

With the incense saturating the air, the Space Wolves found their vision murky and their sense of smell overwhelmed. Ulrik had expected the incense to be an obstruction, but he hadn't anticipated it to have such a pernicious effect. For the first time a troubling thought came to him. He had tried not to underestimate Sathar or to let contempt for the traitor cloud his judgement. Even so, he wondered if he had given their prey enough credit.

The groan of heavy chains grinding their way through pulleys thundered overhead. Ulrik swung around, watching as a massive cauldron was hauled across the hall on a suspended rail. The immense metal vessel abruptly lurched to a stop, hanging for an instant above a pack of Grey Hunters making their way along the factory floor. The Space Wolves scattered as the hook supporting the cauldron released it. Gallons of bubbling chemicals slammed into the floor, spilling over the ferrocrete foundation. Noxious liquid splashed across the Grey Hunters, sizzling against their ceramite armour.

Across the crematorium, other mechanisms suddenly developed violent faults. The doors of a furnace swung open and sent a blast of flame searing across the advance of some Blood Claws, forcing them to leap back and swat at the burning wolf-pelts and talismans hanging from their armour. The nozzle of a sprayer meant to bathe corpses in purifying unguents burst and sent a stream of liquid streaking across the hall with enough force that a pack of Long Fangs were

knocked off their feet.

‘Damn that traitor! Does he think he can stop us with these petty tricks!’ Krom aimed his bolt pistol at a nearby servitor, exploding the half-machine’s head. The servitor slumped beside the flywheel it had just started to turn, arresting the opening of a furnace door.

‘Stay alert,’ Ulrik warned. ‘Don’t let your warriors lose focus.’

He knew his order would be difficult to follow. The whole of the factory was descending into a bedlam of amok machinery. Hydraulic claws dropped down from the ceiling, scrabbling for the Space Wolves below. Pneumatic pincers slashed at the Drakeslayers from behind banks of pressure gauges and lubricant feeds. The rattle of bolters and the screech of chainswords rose in answer to the rampaging machinery.

Some of the servitors now shambled away from their machines. One, holding a great hydraulic hammer clenched in its metal claws, lunged at a Wolf Guard, the head of its tool-turned-weapon cracking the pillar behind the Space Wolf as he dodged from its path. A kick of the Drakeslayer’s boot crumpled the servitor’s leg, pitching it to the floor. A burst from the Wolf Guard’s bolt pistol exploded its head in a spray of blood and lubricant.

Across the factory floor, the Grey Hunters were confronted by a murderous file of maintenance servitors. Each of the automata had a tank of caustic purifiers bolted to its back, hoses snaking out from the canister to connect with the wide-nozzled sprayer that replaced one of its arms. The servitors sent blasts of acidic granules billowing out towards the Grey Hunters, forcing them to take cover behind a bank of machinery before retaliating with a withering fusillade of bolter fire. Engulfed in a cloud of shimmering granules as the canister burst, one of the servitors was quickly consumed down to the bone as its flesh dissolved.

More servitors moved to the attack, turning a medley of instruments and tools against the Drakeslayers. The whirring abrasives of buffers and grinders scraped across ceramite as automata emerged from storage lockers, surprising one of the Blood Claw packs. The young Space Wolves replied with bolters and swords, tearing through their ambushers in a riot of violence. Servitors with promethium projectors turned against a squad of Long Fangs, sheets of rolling flame sizzling against their armour and blackening their tribal talismans before a missile barrage obliterated their attackers.

Something more instinctive than thought made Ulrik turn away from the fray and towards one of the great presses where the ashes of hive-serfs were compacted. Above the gigantic press, standing upon an elevated walkway, was a

lone figure.

Gripping his crozius and plasma pistol a little tighter, Ulrik rushed forwards. When the lurker started to climb higher into the maze of gantries and walkways that stretched across the crematorium, the Wolf Priest gnashed his fangs in frustration. If there was some passage connecting the roof of the building to the next level of the hive, their prey could avoid the warriors Krom had left outside. He'd gain a valuable lead. Ulrik didn't intend to grant the traitor such an opportunity.

The hulking presses loomed before him as Ulrik hurried after his quarry. Leaping over one of the conveyor belts that brought boxes of ashes from the furnaces, the Wolf Priest found himself at the edge of the descending ram. Beyond, he could see the stairs leading up to the walkway. Without a flicker of hesitation, Ulrik sent a ball of plasma searing into the pipes fitted to the side of the press. Oil and fluid erupted from the broken tubes, spraying across the hall. Ulrik dived under the dropping ram, crawling across the bottom of the press. The loss of fluid retarded the descent, causing the plate to lose impetus with each passing second. Just the same, Ulrik felt his backpack squeezing him before he wormed his way free. His boots were barely clear before the heavy ram completed its descent and struck the base with a dull metallic boom.

The thunderous impact wasn't enough to blot out the other sounds that now drew Ulrik's attention. The rattle of bolters had increased, but there was a difference in the reports now, a shift in quality that warned Ulrik not all of the weapons being fired were from the armouries of the Fang. The Dark Angels – had they come to help the Space Wolves or to contend their right to the hunt? Ulrik cast the question aside. Interrogator-Chaplain Balthus could argue his case after the traitor was caught.

The Wolf Priest charged the stairs, lunging up them in great leaps as he took advantage of the planet's low gravity, hurtling across the first walkway and rushing up to a second. A lupine snarl of satisfaction rumbled at the back of his throat when he spotted his prey ahead. The lurker had lingered instead of fleeing. He'd stayed to gloat over the Drakeslayers and the confusion his menagerie of traps had wrought. That was a mistake he was going to regret most dearly.

'Sathar!' Ulrik cried out in challenge. 'Your days of mocking the Allfather are over! Justice has come for you on the fangs of wolves!'

The traitor turned. He wore a heavy cloak that appeared stitched from human skin, but the garment wasn't enough to hide the bulky power armour he wore beneath it or the great leathery wings that sprang from his back. The helm that

peered out from beneath the cloak's hood was pulled out into a beak, the optics fashioned from a yellow transparency that somehow lent them a jaundiced quality.

'I hear you bark, but can you bite?' the traitor snarled. Sathar lunged at Ulrik with the jagged edge of his broken blade. Krom had shattered the sword with Wyrmlaw when the two had fought in the governor's rooms, but the original had been so huge that the remnant was still the size of any normal blade, and just as deadly. The weapon seemed to soak up the shadows around it, blurring its outline as it came slashing towards the Wolf Priest. Narrowly was he able to dodge aside as the blade came smashing down, shearing through the framework and sending a tangle of twisted steel crashing to the floor far below.

Ulrik retaliated, bringing his maul around. He tried to shatter the sword again, but Sathar was too fast, feinting and veering away. A hiss of amusement rasped from Sathar's helm as the traitor struck at Ulrik once more. This time the blade slashed through the guardrail a few inches from the Fenrisian, the severed length of the rail whipping back at him like a snake.

Bringing his crozius crackling across the walkway, Ulrik sent a mass of torn metal flying into the traitor's face. Sathar staggered back, his broken sword incapable of fending off the spray of debris.

'I don't duel traitor scum,' Ulrik growled. He leaped across the pit his maul had gouged in the walkway floor, springing at the traitor like a thunderwolf.

Sathar's sword lashed out, striking at the supports connecting the walkway to the ceiling. The blow sheared through the metal girders. The walkway crumpled, part of its length sliding away to hang forlornly from the rearward span. In an instant, Ulrik found only empty space beneath him. Without hesitating, he hooked the flange of his crozius in the angle between support and walkway, using his momentum to turn his fall into a flip. Pivoting, he flung himself over the guardrail and onto the walkway behind his foe. By his own action, Sathar had trapped himself between the Wolf Priest and a plummet to the factory floor below.

Still there was fight in the traitor. Raising his sword, Sathar rushed towards Ulrik. The Wolf Priest fired his plasma pistol. The impact ripped the weapon from Sathar's hands and pitched it down into the crematorium.

The traitor took a step back and reached for the bolt pistol holstered at his side. A snarl of warning rose from Ulrik.

'Balthus wants you alive, but that's the only thing he said about your condition.'

Sathar moved his hands away from the gun.

‘So you have caught me,’ he said, slowly pointing his hand to the factory below. ‘Or have you? It is a tricky prospect when the hunter finds himself trapped.’

Ulrik could hear the sounds of conflict raging below, the battle cries and combat orders swirling through the inter-squad vox channel. Krom was trying to redeploy his Drakeslayers, to answer the ambush that had suddenly engulfed them. From his vantage point high above the factory floor, Ulrik had a better appreciation of the situation than Krom. He could see how disunited and scattered the traps had left the Space Wolves. More than that, he could see the enemies his battle-brothers now faced. Not a rabble of cultists or rebels, but a force of Space Marines. Even in the fumes of the crematorium, he could tell they weren’t Dark Angels.

‘You aren’t the only one with friends,’ Sathar said. ‘For now, my associates are only trying to keep them busy. It will be much different if they decide to apply themselves in earnest,’ he cautioned.

‘Your traitor friends are outnumbered,’ Ulrik scoffed.

Sathar shook his head. ‘They would surprise you. Besides, they need only hold your comrades long enough for us to talk.’ His voice dropped to an unctuous whisper. ‘I know who you are seeking, who it is you are really hunting.’

Ulrik took a step towards the traitor, his maul ready to strike the turncoat down.

‘You know nothing,’ he snapped, rage boiling within his heart at Sathar’s effort to manipulate him.

‘Logan Grimnar,’ Sathar said, thrusting the name at Ulrik as though it had the bite of his lost sword behind it. ‘That is who you were looking for before you were distracted by Balthus.’

‘You know nothing,’ Ulrik repeated, but even he could hear the lack of conviction in his voice. Sathar had planted a seed of doubt in his mind. Did the traitor really know something? Could he let this chance slip away?

The traitor glanced back down at the factory floor. ‘If the fighting gets much worse, I worry that my associates may want to press the issue. Make your choice while it is still yours to make.’

A sick feeling boiled inside Ulrik’s stomach. To even contemplate a compromise with something like Sathar was an outrage. He would carry it with him as a blight upon his honour for the rest of his days. Yet if there was truly a hope of picking up Grimnar’s trail again, he had to take it. His own honour was small concern beside the welfare of the Chapter.

‘I’ll hear you out,’ Ulrik said. ‘Call off your dogs.’

‘I’ll keep my pistol, just to reassure myself of your sincerity. If you are so inclined, you can try to disarm me once you’ve listened to me,’ Sathar told him. ‘Comrades!’ he spoke into his vox bead. ‘I am captive of the Space Wolves! There is no purpose to further fighting. Withdraw. Withdraw and proceed as planned.’ The traitor swung around to Ulrik. ‘I have called off my dogs, now call off yours.’

‘Lord Krom, I have taken the traitor,’ Ulrik spoke into his helm’s vox-bead. ‘Do not pursue the others. We must remain committed to our cause and not spend our resources on distractions.’

The Wolf Priest glared at Sathar. He knew whatever the traitor wanted to say would be designed to tempt him. He also knew none of it could be trusted. He’d need more, something he *could* trust.

‘Send Leoric Half-ear to me,’ Ulrik said. Whatever deceit was in the traitor’s words, the Rune Priest Leoric would be able to sniff out the truth in his mind.

Sathar the Undone led the Space Wolves into a concealed chamber above one of the crematorium’s sanctuaries. Ulrik grudgingly admired the craft with which the traitor had hidden his refuge. Even knowing it was there, he was hard-pressed to spot the break where a carved finial in the sanctuary pivoted to expose the elevator leading up to the room. The niches in the walls and the stone plinths arrayed about the room made it clear that the place had been intended as a mausoleum at one time, a place to inter those too wealthy and privileged to have their remains reduced to fertilizer. Now the mausoleum was given over to Sathar’s use. Light shone down upon the chamber from panels fitted into the ceiling, illuminators designed to mimic the clean light of unpolluted skies long-since extinct above the surface of Stratovass. Flickering through the warm glow of dawn, passing onto the bright blaze of noon, the panels sent a panoply of shadows wheeling about the room.

The walls were adorned with star charts, the niches converted into caches of data-sheets and pict-slates. Upon the stone plinths were assembled curious devices and artefacts – trophies and mementos that must have been claimed by Sathar during his wanderings across the galaxy. Some Ulrik recognised: the narrow helm of an eldar witch-prophet, the severed talon of a giant genestealer, the broken blade of an Inquisitor’s power sword with the grim iconography of that organisation engraved upon the guard. Others were things beyond even Ulrik’s vast understanding. Among these was a three-foot-tall prism of black glass. There was an oily, creeping atmosphere about the object that made the

Wolf Priest's hackles rise. Leoric Half-ear removed his helm and glared at the thing.

'You can smell the stink of the warp even over the reek of the furnaces,' the Rune Priest growled in disgust.

'A curiosity I came upon rather recently,' Sathar said. 'I haven't had a chance to study it properly, but you must agree it is unique.'

Leoric was peering closer at the glass now. 'There are... things moving inside,' he muttered. 'I can almost...'

The traitor laughed. 'It is dangerous to peer into the abyss unless you know what to look for. You can never be certain what might be looking back.'

Ulrik drew the Rune Priest away from the dark prism. At his touch, Leoric shook his head, as though stirring from a stupor. 'I came to hear about the Great Wolf, not abominations from the warp.' His face contorting into a lupine snarl, he drew his pistol and aimed it at the tainted relic.

'That might be unwise,' Sathar warned. 'I have taken great pains to prevent a doorway to the warp from opening in this city. Shoot the prism and you may accomplish in a heartbeat what the slaves of Chaos have been trying to achieve for months now.'

Ulrik gripped Leoric's arm, pushing the bolt pistol downwards. 'Leave the prism for now,' he told the Rune Priest. 'I need your talents focused upon the traitor. I need to know how much he says is lie and how much is truth,' he elaborated over their private vox channel.

Ulrik's eyes glared from the depths of his skull-helm as he turned towards Sathar. 'Speak quickly, traitor. Balthus is waiting.'

Sathar leaned against one of the plinths. 'Again you call me "traitor", but I tell you I serve the Emperor more completely now than you could possibly understand. A profound revelation came to me, an epiphany. It is this – to destroy monsters, you must become a monster. To defeat the enemy, you must turn its weapons against itself. There can be no measure afforded for honour and morality. All that matters is victory, however it is achieved. Turn Chaos against itself. Use the instruments of heresy to destroy the heretic.'

A low, threatening growl rumbled from behind Ulrik's mask. 'For such madness you abandoned your heritage?'

The runic talismans chained to Leoric's armour shivered with eerie energies as his psychic powers reached out to probe Sathar's thoughts. 'The vermin's mind is consumed by his delusions. Even now he imagines himself a servant of the Allfather.' The Rune Priest's voice seethed with revulsion over the vox.

‘You wouldn’t understand,’ Sathar repeated. ‘It is beyond your ability to understand. You have deluded yourselves with conceits of honour and morality. You couldn’t possibly appreciate what it means to—’

Ulrik sprang forwards, seizing Sathar by his robe. ‘I’ve heard enough of this madness. Tell me about Logan Grimnar. Where is the Great Wolf?’

‘The key to that information isn’t so easy. You will have to work for it,’ Sathar pointed at Leoric. ‘Your Librarian will tell you I don’t lie when I say that I am not responsible for the ritual murders afflicting this city. I have fought against those responsible, but now they are driven to an outrage of such scale that it may be beyond the abilities of my resources to overcome. We need your strength, the ferocity of the Space Wolves, to guarantee victory.’

‘You’re not only mad, but a fool to think we would aid you,’ Ulrik snapped. He tightened his hold upon Sathar, dragging the traitor towards him. ‘There can be no compromise with a heretic.’

‘Wait!’ Leoric’s voice crackled with hate, his eyes shone with bloodlust. ‘I have seen into his mind. The enemy he would loose us against. The leaders controlling this cult. They are of the brood of Magnus!’

Ulrik felt the blood pumping through his hearts blaze with a vengeful fury as he heard the traitor primarch’s name. There were no foes in the galaxy the Space Wolves despised and hated more than the murdering sorcerers of the Thousand Sons. The old Wolf Priest could feel the savagery of the Canis Helix rippling through his flesh, responding to the magnitude of his rage. By an effort of will, he subdued the primal energies, forcing them to recede back into the darkest corners of his being.

‘This is why you were certain we would help you,’ Ulrik seethed. He felt like a beast lured into a trap, baited by his own instincts. How deep did Sathar’s machinations go? Had he intentionally lured the Space Wolves here so that he could exploit their hatred of the Thousand Sons?

‘No. You will help me because it is the only way to find your Chapter Master,’ Sathar said. ‘The Thousand Sons command House Morvane, an entire merchant guild corrupted and sworn to the Ruinous Powers. Their leader, a sorcerer called Medeb, has crossed paths with the Great Wolf. My spies have kept me informed of the cult’s activities for some time now. So far the cult has attempted only minor rituals, lesser obscenities to test the waters. Tonight, however, they intend a far greater abomination.’

‘Convenient timing,’ Ulrik told the traitor.

Sathar nodded. ‘It is because Medeb knows you are here. I was able to hide my

presence from the sorcerer, but the same cannot be said of you and the Dark Angels. Medeb intends to open a doorway to the warp, a channel between Stratovass Ultra and the Eye of Terror. Medeb was cautious before, uncertain that the doorway could be stabilised. Now he has cast aside such reserve. Whether the door remains or not, he will open it all the same.'

Ulrik looked over at Leoric. The Rune Priest shook his head. 'It is what the traitor believes to be true,' he said. 'But that is only perception, not reality.'

'Would you lose the chance to find the Great Wolf because you will not believe me?' Sathar asked. 'If you need further convincing, let this speed your thoughts. I trusted to the honour of the Space Wolves to allow me to speak with you, but I knew there could be no such compact with the Dark Angels. So to gain their aid, my associates have laid a false trail for Balthus. The Dark Angels will follow that trail thinking it will lead to me, but instead they will find the cult. They will be destroyed if they fight alone. Only by combining our forces can victory be assured. If the Space Wolves don't fight, then the Dark Angels will meet their fate. It is in your power to spare them an ignoble doom.'

'You scheme without honour,' Ulrik snarled at Sathar. 'You offer a despicable choice and then explain that it isn't a choice at all. Save Eyriax, save the people, save the Dark Angels, but only if you cooperate.' The Wolf Priest slapped his hand against the plasma pistol holstered at his side. 'Whatever happens, you will be beside me. The first sniff of deceit, the first hint of betrayal, and you can be certain of one thing. I will burn a hole through that scheming brain of yours big enough to fly a Thunderhawk through.'

'I would expect nothing less from Ulrik the Slayer,' Sathar said. 'But do not be too keen to make an enemy of me. There will be foes enough for all of us where we are going.'

Thrusting out from the side of Eyriax, many miles above the surface of Stratovass, the spire of House Morvane was a soaring tower of plasteel and crystal rivalled only by the residences of the planetary governor and the High Ecclesiarch in magnificence and extravagance. Masts of meteoric iron bound in electro-runes of the Adeptus Mechanicus defended the spire from lightning and discharges of the polar aurora. Chemical misters sprayed solutions across wall and roof to combat the ravages of smog and pollutants. Leering gargoyles fashioned from lunar granite shielded the tower from psychic and spiritual malignancies.

It was this last defence that had failed in its purpose. Blessed and sanctified by

all the saints, the gargoyles couldn't protect a place that freely welcomed corruption, that invited the powers of darkness into its halls. What had driven House Morvane to swear themselves to Chaos was unknown. Fear, ambition, revenge – it didn't matter what had lured the merchant guild into heresy. All that was of consequence was that they had been tempted and they had failed the test.

As the Space Wolves prowled along the darkened service corridor, stealing down the maze of passages that wound their way between the opulent galleries and chambers used by the merchants themselves, the hair on Ulrik's arms bristled. Whatever cause had led them to this defilement, it couldn't justify such obscenity.

Ulrik glanced over at Sathar, feeling even greater disgust for the traitor. Sathar had been chosen to transcend humanity, to receive the greatest gifts the Emperor could bestow upon his servants. He had become a Space Marine, superhuman in body, mind and spirit. To him had been bestowed a legacy of honour and courage that was beyond the grasp of common man. He had been entrusted with relics steeped in the blood and bravery of heroes, sacred wargear that had led his battle-brothers to victory in a thousand wars. All of it had been thrown away, cast aside because of a delusion, a madness that through heresy Sathar could find still greater purpose. If not for the oaths he had sworn, if not for the information he might have, Ulrik would like nothing better than to end Sathar's perversion here and now.

The smell of blood drew Ulrik's attention away from the cloaked traitor. A quick click across the inter-squad vox told him that Lopt's scouts had encountered guards in the corridor. Patrolling well ahead of the Drakeslayers, the scouts were thorough in their elimination of any resistance they found. The main body of Krom's warriors would find the remains slumped against the walls, tunics and surcoats stained with gore. Sometimes there was the slash of a knife, other times the bodies bore the marks of tooth and claw. Lopt was too cautious to allow his pack to risk the report of a bolt pistol and too swift to give their victims a chance to fire a shot of their own.

'Your scouts are to be commended,' Sathar remarked. 'I don't think a rat could slip past them.'

Krom ignored him. 'How long have you been watching this place?' The Wolf Lord gnashed his fangs in a fierce display. 'You seem to know all its secrets, all the hidden trails. Just remember this, heretic – if this is a trap, you die first.'

'It won't be a trap,' Ulrik said. He glared at the traitor. 'A trap would be almost honourable. No, he waited for us. He waited for someone to run this risk so he

wouldn't have to. He'd try to contain the cult, keep them from going too far, but actually destroying them was a task he intended to leave to others.'

Sathar shook his head, the optics of his helm focusing on the Space Wolves all around him, each warrior seething with loathing for the traitor in their midst. 'You forget, I share the same risks as you,' he reminded Ulrik.

'Yes, and that worries me even more than whatever evil the Thousand Sons have been conjuring,' Ulrik said. 'At least they make no pretence about who and what they are.'

The traitor laughed. 'There is a saying from ancient Terra – the enemy of your enemy is your friend.'

'There is a Fenrisian custom that a broken sword is never reforged,' Ulrik said. 'It is thrown into the sea, a dead thing. There is no trust for something that has already betrayed one master.' He looked across the Drakeslayers, appreciating far better than Sathar how greatly they were struggling to restrain the instinct to destroy the traitor. 'Do not tempt your doom,' he warned. 'It will find you soon enough.'

'Perhaps all of us,' Sathar said, gesturing to a mark hidden in the gilded scroll work that adorned the sides of the corridor. 'A sign left by my spies. We are near to the Grand Arcade overlooking the Chancellery of House Morvane. Your brothers need hold back but a little longer. Soon they will have foes enough.'

Almost as Sathar spoke, muffled sounds reached the keen senses of the Drakeslayers: a dolorous, reptilian susurrations of many voices raised in a grisly chant. Beneath the chanting, more vibration than sound, was the clamour of primitive drums and woodwinds. Ringing out above the ghoulish cadence was an invocation, an inhuman appeal that raved and shrieked with piteous horror. Every Space Wolf felt his hair crawl in agitation, felt his hearts quicken in response to the abject threat laced within the noise. The cult had started their terrible ceremony, their profane appeal to the powers of Chaos.

Lopt slipped back down the hallway. He stopped before Krom and Ulrik, giving the leaders a hasty report.

'We've found a door in the wall ahead,' the scout sergeant said. 'It opens upon an arcade overlooking a hall the size of the *Ironpelt's* docking bay.'

'Enemy numbers?' Krom asked, fingering the hilt of his sword.

'Hundreds,' Lopt answered. 'A dozen or more Thousand Sons among them.'

'Just as I promised,' Sathar stated. 'It would seem you have your work cut out for you.'

Ulrik rounded on the traitor. 'If the Allfather wills us to be victorious, I will yet

deliver you to Balthus. Until then, you remain in my keeping.’ The last was uttered in a low growl, a reminder not just to Sathar but to the other Space Wolves. The Chaos Space Marine was Ulrik’s responsibility and he intended to carry that burden through.

The Drakeslayers hurried up the corridor. Lopt’s scouts were deployed around a door hidden in the wall, fashioned so that it merged seamlessly with its surroundings. Part of the scrolling slid down at Lopt’s touch, revealing a hidden recess and an angular nub of ivory projecting slightly from the exposed panel. At a gesture from Krom, Lopt pulled the ivory nub, drawing out a rod-like shaft of metal. In response, the concealed door receded into the wall.

The instant the door slid open, the sounds of the ritual swelled to an almost deafening fury. Smells of boiling fat, smouldering offal and singed hair struck the sharp noses of the Space Wolves. A slimy, insidious chill pawed at them, sinking through their ceramite armour with an intensity that had nothing to do with physical temperature. It was the icy clutch of sorcery, the frigid emanations of the warp itself, a malignant pulse that offended the soul. Leoric Half-ear winced in momentary pain, fingers tightening around his rune staff with such force that the ancient relic groaned beneath his touch.

‘They must... be stopped,’ the Rune Priest whispered as he tried to shake off the psychic emanations. He waved away the Grey Hunters who moved to offer him aid, pointing a commanding finger towards the Grand Arcade.

The Drakeslayers began to filter out onto the arcade. It was a broad, colonnaded hallway overlooking the vast expanse of a courtyard below. Tier upon tier of arcades rose upon three sides of the court while the far end was given over to a colossal sheet of crystal. Tinted with a crimson lustre, the crystal looked out upon the storm-swept skies. Strange lightning crackled and flashed beyond the panes, ribbons of electricity snaking out to crash against the iron rods projecting from the walls.

The Chancellery itself had been designed for the obscene rites of House Morvane. Broad enough to accommodate the immense throng of cultists, the centre of the court was dominated by a raised platform cut into a nine-sided wedge. From each angle of the nonagon a smouldering brazier of brass and bone rose, the impaled husk of a butchered sacrifice slowly roasting above the chemical flames. A macabre pattern of indentations cut into the floor allowed blood from the victims to flow through the hall, pouring down the gutter-like slits to form weird patterns and arcane symbols. In the middle of the platform, a ring of rough stones was arrayed, their pitted surfaces aglow with eldritch

harmonies. It was here, among the stones, that the despicable priesthood of the cult performed their abominable rites and a grinning hierophant shrieked the inhuman invocation that dominated even the clamour of the chanting thousands who filled the courtyard.

Ulrik glared at the vile scene, feeling the abhorrent energies the cultists had evoked. His eyes locked upon a clutch of towering figures who held themselves away from the main throng – observing rather than partaking of the ritual unfolding around them. There was no mistaking the fluted vanes that fanned out from the sides of their helms or the golden accents that adorned their ancient armour. At their head stood a sorcerer carrying a staff.

They were the children of Prospero, the archenemy of Fenris. The Thousand Sons.

‘They’re here,’ Krom snarled, hate dripping from his fangs. ‘And here they die,’ he vowed. The Wolf Lord started to swing around to snap orders to the Drakeslayers.

Whatever deployment Krom intended for his warriors, whatever strategy he planned to seal off the courtyard and prevent the heretics from escaping, it all came crashing down in an instant. Far below, beneath the tier that flanked the arcade on which the Space Wolves stood, the steel doors sealing the entrance were ripped from their fastenings, blown inwards by powerful explosions. The huge portals careened across the hall, mutilating scores of cultists as they tore through the throng, crushing dozens more as they came smashing down. The grisly chant exploded into a cacophony of alarm and outrage; the eerie drums and flutes fell silent. Only the diabolical invocation persisted, somehow rising louder and more malignant than before.

Through the shattered doors huge warriors in bone-coloured armour rushed. The Dark Angels had arrived, pursuing the trail Sathar had left for them. The Space Marines, confronted by the obscene spectacle of the massed cultists, exhibited no mercy.

‘Purge the traitor’s flock!’ Interrogator-Chaplain Balthus’ voice boomed, joining his battle-brothers in righteous fury.

‘A bit ahead of my projections,’ Sathar grumbled, as he watched the Dark Angels cutting down robed cultists with flaring power swords and the explosive shells from boltguns. Still, the traitor had a dour tone when he turned to Ulrik. ‘They will need your Wolves if they are to survive.’

Before Ulrik could comment, he saw the cultists begin to react to the attacking Dark Angels. From beneath their robes, the heretics produced a motley array of

weaponry. Stubbers growled while slender laspistols sent beams of energy searing across the hall. Crazy worshippers threw themselves at the hulking Space Marines, knives and hatchets clenched in their fists. A few cultists, amok with their obscene devotion, reached into the braziers and scooped the blazing chemicals onto themselves. These living torches, tortured screams ripping from their lungs, hurled themselves upon their attackers.

These weapons were no match for power armour, though. The Dark Angels pressed their attack, penetrating deeper into the hall. It was then that the first of them fell, stricken not by bullet or blade, but by the malignant energies leaping from the mind of a black-robed psyker. The malevolent conjurations sent the Dark Angel crashing to his knees, blood spilling from the vents in his helmet. An instant later, the hulking warrior fell unmoving to the ground.

‘Long Fangs along the gallery! Target the Thousand Sons!’ Krom bellowed. ‘Grey Hunters, strike down the psykers! Blood Claws and Wolf Guard, with me!’

As he roared out the last order, Krom swung up and over the balustrade. It was a simple matter for someone who had climbed the craggy slopes of Asaheim’s mountains to lower himself from one tier to the next. With their Wolf Lord leading the way, the Drakeslayers followed, eager to join the fray.

Ulrik caught hold of Sathar, pulling the traitor behind the cover afforded by the balustrade. Steel and stone were shredded as a concentration of bolter-fire peppered it. The Thousand Sons had noted the arrival of Krom’s warriors and were taking action to stem their descent. Several Blood Claws were sent hurtling to the floor below as shells slammed into them or ripped apart the columns they were climbing. In the next instant, the arcade trembled as the Long Fangs loosed a barrage of lascannon and missile fire at the Chaos Space Marines. Ulrik could feel the impact of their concentrated fire as a still greater tremor, yet when he looked out from behind the shattered balustrade, the Thousand Sons were unharmed.

‘The enemy is not without protection,’ Leoric snarled. ‘They use sorcery to shield themselves from our guns.’

‘Nor is that their only trick,’ Ulrik swore. Below he saw the Thousand Sons sorcerer – surely the one called Medeb – stalk away from his comrades. Sparks crackled all around him as the fire from the attacking Dark Angels smashed against his arcane shield. Medeb pointed his staff towards the Dark Angels standing between him and the platform. Instantly, the Space Marines were flung back, sent flying across the hall by some unseen force.

‘Our fight is down there,’ Sathar declared, his words surprising Ulrik. The

traitor was already swinging out over the side of the balustrade, shells tearing into the column beside him.

‘Try to counter their sorcery,’ Ulrik told Leoric as he pursued Sathar.

The moment the Wolf Lord showed himself, a shell slammed into his shoulder, splitting the pauldron. He lost his grip, hanging by one hand from the balustrade. Instinctively, he swung his body, using the momentum of his near-fall to propel himself towards a column on the tier below. More fire from the Thousand Sons struck at him, pitting and splitting the column. Again, Ulrik was forced to rely on his finely honed reflexes, casting himself out and away from the exploding stonework. His leap brought him slamming against another column thirty feet below, his armoured fingers digging gouges in the stone as he tried to arrest his momentum. Still the Chaos Space Marines pursued him with a vindictive fusillade, pushing the old Wolf to another hurried leap and another violent drop. The low gravity of Stratovass Ultra lessened the impact, but couldn’t entirely compensate for his fall.

Finally Ulrik reached the floor. He’d been spared the attentions of the enemy when he dropped the last couple of tiers. He quickly saw the reason. The Thousand Sons were falling back towards the ring of stones, pursued by a pack of Blood Claws. It was an eerie contrast – the young, ferocious Space Wolves and the ancient, lifeless pawns of Prospero. The Thousand Sons moved with an uncanny gait, neither organic nor mechanical in nature. There was little of the Space Marine left within the warriors of the Thousand Sons, just a malignant essence and dust.

Ulrik swung around, looking for Medeb. He found the fiend stalking among the stones, using his psychic powers to send charging Drakeslayers and Dark Angels flying. The sorcerer was striving to protect the cult leaders and especially the hierophant who continued to give voice to the profane invocation.

That invocation was now exhibiting its effects. Strange energies coruscated from the middle of the platform, whipping around the standing stones. The malignant forces rippled harmlessly about the armoured forms of the Space Marines, but against the bare flesh of the cultists the results were far more pronounced. Some of the heretics exploded in bursts of blood and bone, while others wilted into puddles of quivering flesh. Yet more were transformed, their bodies twisting and contorting into grisly new shapes. Arms erupted into masses of tentacles, heads expanded into fanged maws dripping with venom. One cultist shrivelled into a reptilian dwarf while another bloated into a feathered giant. The mutated throng renewed its assault against the Space Marines, striking out at

Dark Angel and Space Wolf alike.

Ulrik met the assault of a hideously mutated creature. The thing rushed at him, crackling and laughing, its body already crumbling away as rampant mutations boiled through its flesh. A brutish paw slashed out, narrowly missing the side of his helm. Ulrik swept his crozius across the beast's breastbone, collapsing the loathsome spawn like a balloon. For an instant, the thing tried to resist the annihilating force of the crozius, then with a snarl it sank into a puddle of oozing corruption.

'Nicely done,' Sathar's voice rang in Ulrik's ears.

The Wolf Priest spun about to find the traitor beside him. His cloak was slashed and torn and his armour stained with blood – little of it his own. 'I tried to keep up with you, but it is daunting to keep pace with a wolf on the prowl.'

Ulrik gestured at the carnage unfolding all around them. 'I understood that your fellow traitors would be lending a hand. Perhaps they aren't as loyal as you think them to be.'

'They are in reserve,' Sathar said. 'And I fear we will soon need them.' As he spoke, the traitor aimed his pistol at Medeb, but the shot was diverted from its target, shearing away from the sorcerer to blast apart one of the cult leaders.

'We'll have the sorcerer soon,' Ulrik declared.

Krom and his Wolf Guard had joined the assault against the Thousand Sons. Already two of the ancient traitors had been destroyed, their armour distorting in a blast of warp energy. Balthus and several of his Dark Angels were forcing their way through a cordon of giant mutants to reach the periphery of the platform.

'They'll be too late,' Sathar swore. 'He knows he's finished. Now he wants to take everyone with him.'

Ulrik saw what Sathar meant. Medeb turned upon the cult hierophant, cutting the cultist down with a sweep of his staff. The invocation, however, didn't falter. It was immediately taken up by Medeb himself. Now the cadences became more strident, less nebulous. There was imperative behind the spell now – not an appeal but a command. The sorcerer was pouring his own spirit into the conjuration, ripping asunder the barriers between reality and the immaterium.

Pulses of hideous power now spilled from the platform, rushing down among the remaining cultists. None were left unchanged, their bodies distorting in the most atrocious discord. The mortally injured, the hideously maimed: wherever a spark of life yet lingered, the greedy daemons swept in to control and reshape it.

Orbs of gibbous light dissipated from the midst of the circle, expanding and swelling until they assumed monstrous shapes. Beaked fiends bounded across

the hall, immolating victims in blasts of daemonic fire while fish-like horrors fluttered up into the arcades upon winged lobes.

The battle had turned, the rampant horde of mutants and daemons forcing the Space Marines back. The Dark Angels became surrounded, and packs of Drakeslayers were cut off from their battle-brothers. All through the hall, the conflict degenerated into isolated combats pitting superhuman endurance against inhuman malevolence. A towering nightmare, its feline body bristling with psychic fires and spectral flames, charged through a swathe of Wolf Guard to snap and claw at Krom. Only the Wolf Lord's reflexes kept the beast from landing a killing blow. Across from the embattled Krom, Balthus was similarly beset by a serpent-like fiend with six heads, the flattened husk of a Dark Angel caught in its coils.

'I fear it is time to deploy my assets,' Sathar told Ulrik. 'Try to remember who is the enemy.' The traitor issued orders into his vox bead.

Sathar's signal brought an almost immediate response. His associates, the resources he'd kept in reserve, had been lingering on the periphery of the Chancellery. Now they filed into the great hall, deploying along the lower arcades. Like the ones Krom and Grundar had fought in the governor's rooms, they were from the Alpha Legion. Ulrik could scarcely believe he was in this hideous situation – fighting alongside the traitors he longed to tear apart.

Yet as disaster loomed, it was the Alpha Legion who brought relief to the reeling loyalists. From the lower arcades, their fire raked the mutant throng. The great crystal face of the window was shattered as missiles came shrieking into the courtyard to batter the largest of the monsters. Ulrik had a fleeting impression of a gunship circling through the storm.

With the sudden onslaught of the Alpha Legion throwing the cult into disarray, Ulrik saw his opportunity. Medeb had overplayed his hand and exposed the nature of his ritual. He was the key; without him the spell would lose focus. Perhaps the gate would even shut itself entirely.

'I'm going for the sorcerer,' Ulrik told Sathar, nodding at the traitor's pistol. 'Cover me... or at least don't shoot me in the back.'

Ulrik knew if he hesitated, his chance might be lost. For the moment, the forces raging across the hall had left a breach. Any instant might see it close again. He had to act. Lunging forwards, the Wolf Priest hurtled up the platform. He felt the rampaging energies of the gateway rippling around him. Some of the Fenrisian talismans he bore were reduced to ash by the eldritch assault. Only by holding his crozius before him was he able to force a path through the maelstrom. Even

then, he found his progress barred. The Thousand Sons, those still animated by the spirits bound within their armour, moved to intercept him.

Raising his plasma pistol, Ulrik sent a ball of energy searing through one of the Chaos Space Marines. The ancient armour exploded, burst apart by the fury of the escaping spirit. He scowled at his spent weapon. The plasma would need time to cool before it could be unleashed again. That left two opponents in his way. As one, the ghostly warriors lifted their boltguns and took aim at their foe. Ulrik glared back at them. He might reach one, but doing so would leave him open to the other.

Snarling a prayer to Morkai the death wolf, Ulrik sprang towards the enemy on his right. His crozius swept out, smashing across the Chaos Space Marine's helm, splitting it open. The traitor staggered back, an uncanny light bleeding out from the crack in its helmet. The boltgun fell from its fingers and it pitched backwards, collapsing in a burst of warp energy.

Ulrik was surprised to find that the other had failed to fire upon him. The closeness of Sathar's scent told him that the traitor must have intervened, striking down the Chaos Space Marine before it could attack.

'Leave Medeb to me,' Ulrik warned Sathar. The sorcerer had to be taken alive, had to disclose what he knew about the Great Wolf.

Medeb saw Ulrik coming. Until the last moment, the sorcerer maintained his invocation, keeping the daemoniac gateway open as long as possible. It wasn't until Ulrik brought the crozius swinging towards his head that Medeb ended his incantation. Bringing up his staff, he blocked the energised mace. Sparks erupted from the antagonistic energy fields, the unholy emanations of the warp-infused staff straining against the sacred properties of the crozius.

'You find no victory here, cur of Russ,' Medeb taunted. 'All you can do is meddle.'

Ulrik glared into the beaked mask of his foe. 'Magnus said the same thing before we burned your world.'

Twisting the crozius around, he brought his boot crashing into the sorcerer's gut, pushing his foe back. When Medeb swept his staff around to parry, Ulrik ducked beneath his adversary's strike, pushing the staff away, and struck the sorcerer's left wrist. Ceramite, flesh and bone were obliterated in an instant, pulverised by the destructive field surrounding the crozius.

The stricken sorcerer stumbled back, staring in disbelief at his severed hand. As he started to raise his staff to retaliate, the Wolf Priest's crozius crashed down upon it. Instead of merely breaking the staff, the impact caused it to explode,

unleashing the malefic energies Medeb had drawn into it. The resultant blast obliterated the sorcerer's head, leaving only a smoking stump behind.

Ulrik scowled down at the dead sorcerer. Drained by the ritual he'd performed, Medeb had been unable to protect himself from his own power. It was a fate the traitor deserved, but with his destruction the Space Wolves had lost the hope of picking up Logan Grimnar's trail.

The discord of battle still raged through the courtyard, the Dark Angels and Space Wolves finishing the daemons and mutants conjured by House Morvane's ritual. The Alpha Legion, Ulrik noted, had already withdrawn, stealing back into the shadows before they could be confronted by those in service to the Allfather.

Sathar had remained behind.

'You have kept your word to me,' he told Ulrik. He gestured to where Balthus was despatching a knot of cultists. 'But you must break your word to him.'

'Never,' Ulrik snarled at the traitor. He reached for his plasma pistol. The weapon was ready to fire again, ready to cripple Sathar if he tried to flee.

'I know you will,' Sathar said. 'It is why I took such a risk. You aren't hunting me.'

Ulrik's voice became a bestial growl. 'You said Medeb had crossed the Great Wolf's trail,' he declared.

'So he did, but I think you'll agree killing him was necessary,' Sathar said. 'Besides, there is a better way to track down your Chapter Master. Trust that I can help you find him. Even a Space Marine must sometimes show a little faith.'

Ulrik was sickened by the debate that tore at him. What should he choose – his duty to his Chapter or his obligation to his allies? Sathar might be twisted, but the traitor hadn't yet told a lie. If he said he had knowledge of Logan, then he probably did. It was his hold-card, the piece he had kept off the table until he could use it to buy his freedom.

'What do you offer?' Ulrik demanded.

Sathar smiled.

'The prism,' he said. 'Have your Librarian stare into it, only this time have him think only of your Great Wolf. The vision he finds in the lens will guide you. Of course, the prism is a thing of the warp. If Balthus learns of it, he will demand its immediate destruction. He will consider anyone who uses it tainted and corrupt – heretics to be destroyed.'

The revulsion boiling inside him was unlike anything Ulrik had ever experienced. Duty and obligation fought within him, but he knew where his loyalty must fall. 'Go,' he snapped at Sathar. 'If our paths ever cross again, I will

show you no mercy.'

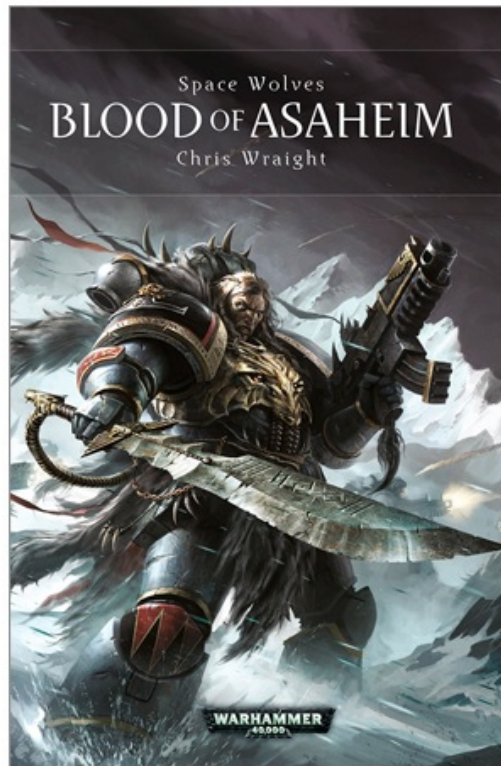
Sathar nodded and hurried across the platform towards the shattered window. 'If our paths cross again, old wolf, it will be by my design.'

Ulrik saw the traitor leap through the broken window, his grisly cloak whipping about him as the polluted winds of Eyriax lashed at his body. Sathar's lunge brought him to the wing of the Alpha Legion gunship. The Wolf Lord's last sight of the Traitor Space Marine was of him being pulled into the aircraft as it peeled away and rose into the smoggy sky.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

C L Werner's Black Library credits include the Space Marine Battles novel *The Siege of Castellax*, the End Times novel *Deathblade*, *Mathias Thulmann: Witch Hunter*, *Runefang*, the Brunner the Bounty Hunter trilogy, the Thanquol and Boneripper series and *Time of Legends: The Black Plague* series. Currently living in the American south-west, he continues to write stories of mayhem and madness set in the worlds of Warhammer and Warhammer 40,000.

[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 – Scent of a Traitor ©
Copyright Games Workshop Limited 2015. Legends of the Dark
Millennium: Space Wolves – Scent of a Traitor, 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.

ISBN: 978-1-78251-953-9

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.