

WARHAMMER 40,000



SPACE WOLVES 8

WRATH OF THE WOLF

WARHAMMER
40,000



SPACE WOLVES 8
WRATH OF THE WOLF

SPACE WOLVES

WRATH OF THE WOLF

C L Werner

As he accompanied Interrogator-Chaplain Balthus up into the old mausoleum above the crematorium, Ulrik considered the strange events that had brought him to this place. Every creak and groan that rattled through the elevator gnawed at him, worrying at his conscience, reminding him that it was the traitor Sathar who hid from the light of the Emperor, not Balthus. Yet circumstances had conspired to make the Wolf Priest honour his compact with the Traitor Space Marine over his alliance with the Dark Angels.

The smell of blood and battle was still in his nose. It hadn't been so long ago that he'd stood in the halls of the corrupt House Morvane, fighting alongside Sathar against the cultists and their masters from the Thousand Sons. The sorcerer Medeb had been prevented from opening a doorway between Stratovass Ultra and the Eye of Terror only through the agency of Sathar and the Alpha Legion. It wasn't recognition of that service which had moved Ulrik to forsake his agreement with Balthus and allow the traitor to escape. It had been the clue Sathar had provided the Space Wolves... a clue that might lead them to Logan Grimnar and his vanished companions.

The moment the elevator reached the traitor's abandoned refuge, Balthus was prowling around the plinths, studying the niches in the walls. The Dark Angels had removed everything once the Space Wolves had told them about Sathar's lair. Even so, Balthus was paranoid that they had missed something. At least, that was his excuse for bringing Ulrik back with him to the mausoleum. Now that they were alone, the Dark Angel felt at liberty to voice the suspicions that had been growing in his mind.

‘The agreement was that we should help one another in our hunts. The sons of Caliban have kept their side of the arrangement. Can the same be said of the sons of Fenris?’ Balthus asked.

The Interrogator-Chaplain stalked through Sathar’s stronghold like a predator on the prowl, studying every inch as he went. At the moment, the Dark Angel seemed more like a Space Wolf than a product of the Lion’s gene-seed. The resemblance impressed upon Ulrik that for all their differences, there were many points of kinship between the two Chapters. They fought to protect the same Imperium and their loyalty was to the same Emperor. They should be united in purpose. Instead, as had happened so often in the many millennia since the Heresy, they were at odds.

‘Be careful, Interrogator,’ Ulrik advised. ‘Calling the honour of the Space Wolves into question is a reckless thing. Such accusations are typically answered by blade and claw. You are fortunate that I’ve been around long enough to make allowances for those who speak before they think.’

Balthus stood beside one of the plinths. It was the same one upon which the prism had stood. The Dark Angels had seized the dataslates, star charts and other paraphernalia that Sathar had left behind. After permitting the traitor to escape, Ulrik had felt duty-bound to give the Dark Angels every possible clue that might put them back on the traitor’s trail.

Every clue, except one. The prism had been removed before the Dark Angels were shown Sathar’s lair. Even now, it was hidden inside the Stormwolf, the *Rolling Thunder*.

‘The Angels have ever been a temperamental lot,’ Balthus declared. ‘Some do indeed speak without thinking. It is left to Wolves to act without thinking.’ He spun around, facing Ulrik, the optics of his helm glowing like embers. ‘Sathar was here! So close I could reach out and touch him! You caught his scent, found his lair! We were so close...’

‘Thwarting the ritual the Thousand Sons were orchestrating was more important,’ Ulrik said. ‘Every soul on this world was imperilled. Had we delayed even a moment, there is no saying how dire the consequences would have been. You lost six of your battle-brothers in the fight against House Morvane. How many more would have been slain if we’d ignored the cult and pursued Sathar instead?’

‘Only because he saw no profit for himself in their triumph!’ Balthus scoffed. ‘I tell you, there is no villainy Sathar would not commit. Six battle-brothers, a hundred battle-brothers, they would be a small sacrifice to bring this monster to

justice!’ The Dark Angel walked across the chamber towards the entrance where Ulrik stood. ‘Forgive any insult my anxiety draws from my tongue. You cannot understand the frustration, the disappointment this has brought upon me. There is nothing more important to me than putting an end to Sathar’s infamies. Here, the hunt has come closer than ever. I am not too proud to accept that we came so close because of our comrades from Fenris.’

Ulrik clapped his hand on Balthus’ shoulder. ‘I know what you would ask of me, but it is impossible. We are sworn to our own hunt. We have vowed to seek out the Great Wolf and learn what has befallen him. There is nothing that can make us turn away from our purpose.’

The Dark Angel brushed Ulrik’s hand away. ‘Then you have found some new clue to your Chapter Master’s fate. I suspected as much. I will not ask how you came by such information or where.’ He turned around and pointed at the plinth. ‘I will not ask you why Sathar only took with him the object that made that imprint in the dust and left everything else behind for us to recover. No, I won’t ask such things of you.’

Balthus marched past Ulrik. ‘Just as you will not be turned from your hunt, neither will I stray from my own. I *will* find Sathar. When I do, I will ask him these questions. Then we of Caliban will better understand the ways of Fenris.’

Ulrik watched the Interrogator-Chaplain as he stalked away into the battle-scarred halls of the crematorium. He knew Balthus would be as good as his word.

The corridors of the crematorium were silent now. Save for some enforcers conducting an investigation into the subversion of the facility’s staff, the place was empty of activity. It would be some time before the damage inflicted on the factory could be repaired and the disturbed machine-spirits appeased by the tech-priests. The Ecclesiarchy had already dispatched some of its less influential clergy to begin recruiting a new cadre of laymen to fill the positions vacated by Sathar’s minions.

Emerging from the crematorium, Ulrik made his way back to the *Rolling Thunder*. The gunship had landed in the centre of the plaza, its formidable grey bulk filling the space. Crowds of nervous hivers were gawking at the ship and the fabled Adeptus Astartes who were making their last inspections before their departure. As Ulrik crossed the square, Krom Dragongaze approached and fell into step beside the Wolf Priest.

‘I’ve stashed that damned curse-stone the traitor gave us on the gunship,’ Krom reported. ‘It’ll take a sharper eye than Balthus’ to find it.’

‘Let’s not put that to the test,’ Ulrik said. ‘He’s just suspicious enough to try.’

‘Once it’s on the *Canis Pax* and Leoric Half-ear sniffs out what we need from it, I’m of a mind to toss it out an airlock,’ Krom said. ‘The sooner we’re done with the thing the better.’

Ulrik could appreciate the Wolf Lord’s sentiment. The prism was a thing of the warp, thus pernicious and deadly. Before the Rune Priest exposed his mind to the visions locked inside the crystal, Ulrik wanted to sanctify Leoric with prayer and ceremony, to invoke the Allfather’s blessing and safeguard him against the horrors that awaited him.

‘Let us move swiftly,’ Ulrik advised. ‘Leave this planet and set Leoric to his ordeal. The sooner we can find Logan Grimnar’s trail, the sooner we can reclaim our honour.’

It had taken Leoric Half-ear considerable effort to unlock the secret of the prism. The process had been far more difficult than Sathar had implied, and Leoric had discovered the prism to be a treacherous and conniving thing. It put visions and distractions in his mind, continually trying to tempt him away from his purpose. Every fleeting glimpse he was afforded would be smothered beneath a flood of noise and distortion. Whispers scratched at his brain, voices clawed at his soul, intelligences malignant and inhuman tried to reach into him from the warp-tainted glass. A less disciplined will than that of a Space Marine would have collapsed under the strain – driven to madness or worse. But Leoric was able to prevail against the deceits of the prism and at length unlock the knowledge the Space Wolves needed.

In the prism, Leoric saw the planet to which Logan Grimnar’s strike cruiser, the *Eternity Fang*, had gone after it left Dactyla. He saw the ship apparently destroyed, annihilated by some cosmic force, but he also saw that the Great Wolf and his companions hadn’t shared their ship’s fate. They’d made planetfall. What became of their brothers after that, Leoric couldn’t say. Even his stamina had reached a point near collapse. It was enough for their purposes that the Space Wolves had managed to identify the planet.

Dargur was a world recorded in the sagas of the Fang. The blighted, forsaken planet had played a role in the first Great Hunt. A wasted sphere orbiting a crimson dwarf just within the Eye of Terror, it had been the place of battle and horror for millennia. The Great Wolf Bjorn had led his warriors there in search of their primarch, finding instead only daemons and the remnants of a debased xenos civilization.

Now it was to this desolate world that Logan Grimnar had led his own Great Company. Ulrik wondered if his old friend had discovered new evidence that Russ had visited Dargur or if he had been led here by the same broken trail Bjorn had followed so long ago. That the Great Wolf had failed to return to Fenris, or at least send word back to his Chapter, was proof enough that some distress had befallen the Champions of Fenris.

Penetrating the Eye of Terror was formidable enough a task. Even the most powerful navigators didn't risk straying too close to this cosmic blight. It was a place where the energies of the warp bled out into physical space, distorting the laws of reality and providing sustenance for all manner of daemonic horrors. Complicating the ordeal still further were the jumbles of asteroids littering the system, the shattered remnants of Dargur's sister worlds. Around Dargur itself there was a ring of semi-daemonic satellites, perverse constructs of a vanquished xenos' science.

Ulrik was impressed by the skill Rogan Bearsbane exhibited as he steered a path through the satellites. Rogan displayed an uncanny facility for detecting which of the defence drones were inactive and which yet possessed a flicker of malignance within their corroded frames. Only twice was the ship hit during its descent to Dargur's surface. The damage wasn't sufficient to cripple the ship, though Rogan was leery of tempting the fates again until full repairs were made. Some of the other Stormwolf gunships were battered far worse before they reached the surface.

Making planetfall on Dargur was an accomplishment devoid of victory. Ulrik could smell the uneasiness that gripped his warriors as he watched them ready themselves to disembark. They couldn't forget that this was the world Bjorn had visited in search of Leman Russ. They couldn't forget that his hunt for the primarch had failed. Would they too find only defeat here?

'All is in the hands of the Allfather,' Ulrik told his warriors as he moved among them. 'If you prove yourself worthy of triumph, then he will grant it to you.' He reached out and took a wolf-tail talisman a Blood Claw held towards him, bestowing his blessing upon the totem before returning it.

Near the hatchway, Ulrik found Leoric waiting for him. The Rune Priest had driven wolf-bone talismans into his forehead, the runes etched into each marked with his own blood.

'The dreams are quiet,' Leoric told Ulrik when he felt the Wolf Priest's eyes on him. 'The spirits of Fenris have subdued the cries of Chaos.'

'For how long?' Ulrik wondered, unconsciously brushing his fingers across the

heft of his crozius.

Leoric closed his eyes and bowed his head. ‘Long enough to lead us where we need to go,’ he vowed. Blood trickled down his face and over his lips. Dragging one finger across his mouth, he daubed the image of claws across his cheeks. It was an almost forgotten custom, sealing his promise in blood.

Ulrik slammed his hand against the stud that controlled the *Rolling Thunder*’s hatch. The rumble of groaning plasteel and servo-motors filled the hold as the doors opened. The lower ramp shuddered outwards, folding upon itself as it slammed down on the surface of Dargur.

Ulrik recalled vividly the data recorded about Dargur in the sagas. He remembered, too, listening to Bjorn describe the place when the Dreadnought was roused from his rest. The descriptions hardly compared to what he saw now. The caprices of the Eye of Terror had wrought awful changes upon the cursed world. The sky was a purple bruise blotched by ugly stains of black and ochre, smudges too nebulous to rate being called clouds. The earth was a waste of black dirt, parched and barren. It lay around the gunship in an undulating course of hills and gullies. Beyond, in the distance, scabrous formations reared up into the sky, monstrous growths of rock that might have been the skeletal echo of mighty mountains. The sun, sullen and spiteful as it loosed its crimson glow upon the planet, reminded Ulrik of a kraken’s eye – watchful and fearsome.

The other gunships were landing nearby. Scarcely had the *Wolfhowl* settled upon the desolate ground than the ramp came slamming down and Krom Dragongaze launched himself forwards in a great leap that carried him several feet from the hatchway. He crashed down in the grimy black dirt, a cloud of dust rising all around him.

Krom rose from his crouch, Wyrmfang clenched tight in his right hand while a fistful of dirt trickled through the fingers of his left.

‘Daemons of Dargur!’ he bellowed. ‘Cower in your lairs! Hide in your holes! The Space Wolves have returned and I, Krom Dragongaze, have brought them!’

The defiant howls of their lord brought Krom’s Wolf Guard charging down the ramp. Ulrik and Leoric adopted a more measured pace. The horrors of Dargur, they were sure, would still be waiting for them.

As he reached the ground, Leoric fell to his knees. Carefully, the Rune Priest reached into a wolfskin bag hanging at his side. Muttering an invocation to the spirits of Fenris, he cast a handful of tiny bones onto the ground, then leaned over them, studying them with a cautious eye before probing them with one armoured finger, turning them from side to side, examining each angle as it was

exposed.

Other Space Wolves came over to observe Leoric consulting the bones. Wherever they fought, however far they travelled, the traditions of Fenris bound them, gave them the strength to defy any adversity. When Ulrik looked into the exposed faces of Blood Claws and Wolf Scouts, he saw the uneasiness of tribal superstition there, but he also saw a gleam of hope.

‘Well, do the spirits tell you anything?’ Krom asked as he stood above the Rune Priest.

Leoric looked up, snatching the bones from the ground in one fist. He pointed towards the horizon. ‘The howl of Fenris is strongest in that direction,’ he said. Each word seemed to fight for purchase on his tongue and his face was marred by the strain his divinations had inflicted.

Krom nodded. He brought Wyrmfang up and pointed the blade to the west. ‘Lopt and the scouts to the fore!’ he commanded. ‘Keep your noses keen for the scent of our brothers! Keep your eyes sharp for the claws of our enemies!’

Forming up around their Wolf Lord, the Drakeslayers set out across the desolate wastes of Dargur. Ulrik gathered his strike force and followed Krom towards whatever doom lay before them.

‘Troll-sucking vermin!’ Krom bellowed as his axe swept through the ropery neck of a shrieking slytherfang. The twelve-foot reptile slopped away from Wyrmfang, splashing across the rocks in writhing sections. All around him, the Space Wolves were beset by a swarm of the mutated creatures, a slithering horde that had erupted from the ground in a seething mass of fangs and coils.

Ulrik slammed his foot down on the neck of one reptile, breaking its spine and pushing organs out of its mouth. A second creature perished as the field of his crozius blackened its scales and vaporised its blood. The thing flopped about for a moment in a mindless display of agony.

Beasts though they were, the attack was staged like a carefully planned ambush. Not until the Space Wolves were in the very midst of the swarm did they crawl out from between the broken rocks. They’d waited until they could bring their full strength against the Fenrisians, displaying a patience beyond simple vermin. That fact troubled Ulrik immensely. Throughout their trek across the wastes of Dargur, from the hills of dirt to the scummy swamps of amber slime and now these flatlands of stone slabs, creatures of every description had harassed and tormented them. Not with the stubborn tenacity of beasts, but with the deliberate persistence of a higher intelligence.

It was an impression that Ulrik couldn't shake as he watched the swarm of reptiles crawl from their burrows and hurl themselves at the armoured Space Wolves. The beasts attacked without fear or hesitation, dying by the droves on the blades and claws of the Fenrisians.

Ulrik smashed another of the reptiles with his maul. The vermin didn't represent a real threat to the Space Wolves, at least not one that could drag them down in battle. It was the constant harassment that was taking its toll, wearing away at the discipline of the Space Wolves, provoking more and more the savage instincts that were the legacy of the Canis Helix. With each attack they became that little bit more reckless and feral in their reactions. Bit by bit, the cohesion that made them a company of warriors was being eroded.

The last of the slytherfangs perished upon Krom's axe. The Wolf Lord glared at the dying creature, then flung its carcass from him and threw his head back in a victorious howl. The cry caught in his throat as he spotted something in the sky overhead.

'Beware, brothers!' Krom shouted. 'The enemy falls upon us from above!' Ripping his bolt pistol from its holster, he sent a burst of fire streaming upwards.

From the sky, a great flock of ebon-winged horrors swooped downwards. Heedless of the bolter fire that rose to greet them, the monsters descended, sickening shrieks rising from their misshapen beaks and fanged jaws. Fiery ichor dripped from their torn flesh, sizzling as it struck the rocks below. Like the mutant lizards, the winged fiends threw themselves at the Space Wolves with an amok ferocity, but unlike the reptiles there was a malicious determination burning in their eyes. More than mere beasts, the foes the Drakeslayers now faced were entities of the warp – daemons.

One of the furies fell upon a Blood Claw, raking the warrior's exposed face with its claws, tearing away great ribbons of flesh. Another sank its talons in the shoulder of a Grey Hunter, seeking to drag the armoured Space Wolf with it as it rose back into the sky. Both daemons soon discovered the folly of their efforts. The Blood Claw, ignoring his ghastly wounds, caught the flying foe with his chainaxe, ripping it apart in a welter of gore. The Grey Hunter, lifted a few feet into the air, fired a burst from his boltgun that exploded the fury's head and sent fragments of its skull clattering across the rocks.

Everywhere, the Space Wolves were wreaking havoc upon the daemons, yet still more of the horrors came. Ulrik swept his crozius into the faces of shrieking furies, the sanctified field of energy shattering their obscene essence and exploding them in bursts of sizzling ichor. Leoric, raising his rune staff, drew

upon the ancient powers of Fenris, calling lightning from the diseased sky to immolate clutches of winged daemons. Krom, roaring his defiance, brought axe and bolt pistol against the flock of enemies that dived down upon him, littering the rocky shelf with dismembered fragments that slowly steamed away into crumbling bits of cinder.

Amidst the carnage, a sudden impulse gripped Ulrik, drawing his attention to one of the furies. The daemon soared about the periphery of the fray, but unlike its fellows, the fiend refused to commit itself to the battle. A primal instinct of warning flared through Ulrik's mind, crying out to him that the circling fury represented a threat greater than the entire flock. Ignoring the daemons swarming around him, the Wolf Priest aimed his plasma pistol at the soaring creature and sent a ball of fire blazing towards it.

Either by chance or infernal design, one of the other daemons dropped down between Ulrik's shot and his intended target. The stricken fury exploded in a dazzling coruscation of fire and light, the charred remnants of its wings fluttering to the ground like falling leaves. Ulrik's target dropped down, streaking for the earth some distance from the battle. Ulrik saw it shift and change as it fell, transforming into one of the slytherfangs before hitting the ground and slinking away into a rocky crevice.

Ulrik knew that this creature was the guiding intelligence behind all the harassing attacks the Drakeslayers had endured. He had seen for himself the formless doppelgangrels of Asaheim, shape-shifting haunters of the forests. This, however, was something even more dangerous, a malignant entity that could both change its form and command lesser creatures to obey its commands. His thoughts turned back to the daemoniac Changeling, the monster that had mocked them within the Great Hall itself.

Had the fiend followed them? Had the Changeling been dogging their trail from the very beginning? Ulrik wasn't certain if that possibility was less troubling than the other: that the Changeling had been waiting for them on Dargur all this time.

The Drakeslayers were exterminating the last of the furies, Long Fangs burning them out of the sky with heavy flamers and frag missiles. The rocky shelf was stained with their odious residue, a mephitic vapour rising from the greasy stains left by their dissolution. Ulrik took a step towards the hole into which he'd seen the shape-shifter disappear. He shook his head in dismay. It was doubtful the thing had lingered, even more doubtful that it had maintained the same form. He might search for days without finding the creature's trail. And if it truly was the

Changeling, then any delay at this point would put the entire hunt in jeopardy.

‘Lord Ulrik!’

The Wolf Priest turned as he heard himself being called. He could see a pack of Blood Claws gathered around the prostrate form of a comrade, the mangled carcasses of several furies scattered around him. There was a hideous rent in the fallen Space Wolf’s chest plate, strips of meat caught in the torn ceramite. Even at a distance, Ulrik could smell the stink of death rising from the stricken Blood Claw. Already the warrior was standing before the Gates of Morkai. There was nothing that could be done for him, but by harvesting his progenoid glands, Ulrik could ensure the warrior’s legacy lived on.

Sombrely, Ulrik removed the Fang of Morkai from his belt and began to recite the prayers that would commend the fallen warrior’s spirit to the Allfather. He wondered, before the hunt was over, how many more times he would be called upon to harvest the legacy of the dead.

Hours after the attack by the furies, the Drakeslayers saw an end to the rocky flatland. The cracked shelves of stone gave way to an eerie vista – a vast forest of crystalline trees. The crimson light of Dargur’s sun sent weird reflections shimmering from the angular facets of the translucent trunks and branches, creating the mirage of a rolling sea. As soon as the forest came into view, Lopt and his scouts set out ahead of the main body, intent upon ferreting out any unseen hazards that might be lurking ahead.

They didn’t have long to discover the threat the forest posed. As Lopt drew near, the crystalline trees hurled slivers of themselves at him. The shards sheared through the rocky shelf and several stabbed their way into the scout’s armour before he could retreat back out of their range. Lopt’s comrades took hold of the old veteran, helping him reach the rest of the Drakeslayers. The ferocity with which Lopt was cursing his misfortune told Ulrik the scout was in no danger. Morkai wouldn’t allow anyone with that much anger into his halls.

Briefly, the Space Wolves considered going around the forest. Leoric consulted his runes again, but his divinations directed them through the obstacle, not around it.

Krom pulled at his beard a moment, peering into the shimmering forest. Even his vaunted stare could discern no hidden secret amidst the strange trees. ‘We’ve enough weaponry to level a few miles, but this stuff might stretch on for hundreds before we see the other side. I find myself wishing we had a psyber-raven. A view from above would be worth a gallon of mead right now.’

Ulrik studied the forest ahead of them. Everything was still, exhibiting an eerie silence. A thought occurred to him. Taking a rock from the ground, he tossed it into the trees. As it clattered against one of the crystalline stalks, it gave off a loud crack. Instantly the trees loosed a salvo of slivers. A second stone, tossed with more care, landed on the sandy soil without sound. This time there was no barrage from the trees.

Behind the lupine Helm of Russ, Ulrik smiled.

‘The trees lack eyes to see, but in some fashion they are able to hear.’ He nodded towards Lopt, who was being attended by the other scouts. ‘Lopt must have made a sound that drew their notice and so they fired upon him.’

Krom ground his fangs together.

‘Lopt is the best hunter I have,’ he said, his voice lowered so his words of praise wouldn’t reach the other Drakeslayers. ‘He can sneak into a thunderwolf’s den and steal her cubs with the mother sleeping right beside them. If he made too much noise to slip past these trees, then none of us will be equal to the task.’ The Wolf Lord paused, a toothy grin appearing on his face. ‘Maybe the answer isn’t less noise, but more.’

Without further explanation, Krom stalked towards the forest, angrily waving back his Wolf Guard when the warriors would follow him. Step by step, he approached the trees, eyes locked upon the tracks left by Lopt, judging when he’d be close to where the trees had reacted to the scout. When he reached the spot, the Wolf Lord stopped. Facing the crystal growths, Krom threw back his head and howled.

The howl Krom gave voice to didn’t sound from his own throat, or at least so it seemed to the Drakeslayers watching him anxiously from the rocks. The noise appeared to reverberate out in the midst of the forest, a trick of ventriloquism the Wolf Lord had employed to amuse his entourage many times before in the halls of the Fang. Now the trick deceived more than the ears of Space Wolves. The trees, reacting to the howl, cast splinters not towards Krom, but at the distant spot from which the howl seemed to issue.

Still throwing his howl, Krom began to walk towards the trees. He crossed the line where Lopt had aroused the forest. Steadily Krom pressed onward, still howling, still meeting no resistance to his own advance. When he’d pressed several feet past the point where Lopt was attacked, he stopped howling. Turning around, he sprinted back towards the rocks. Crystal splinters flew at him, dogging him until he was out of range.

‘There’s the riddle solved!’ Krom laughed, walking proudly before his warriors.

‘The trees can be tricked! Give them a choice of targets and they will strike at the loudest!’

‘I should think the Drakeslayers aren’t eager to lose their Wolf Lord,’ Ulrik told Krom. ‘Unless you think there’s someone louder than you.’

Krom chuckled at the Wolf Priest’s humour. ‘No, old one, we’ll not howl our way across. We’ll blast our way across.’ He pressed his hand against the grenade dispenser on his belt. ‘We toss a grenade out among the trees to either side of our path and while they’re busy shooting at the noise, we slip through.’ He shrugged as he conceded one point against his plan. ‘Might be slow going, but at least we can be sure of seeing the other side.’

As the Wolf Lord had feared, progress through the forest was a slow, tedious affair. But it was progress. Each set of grenades the vanguard threw kept the trees occupied long enough for the column to gain twenty or thirty yards at a run. Speed rather than caution dictated the pace during the brief spurts between grenades. Ulrik was impressed by the cohesion with which the warriors executed the arduous operation. The Space Wolves froze in place with an almost mechanistic precision whenever things were quiet. Beregelt had already taken the precaution of muzzling Vangandyr and the other wolves.

After several hours of the gruelling advance, one of the vanguard nudged Ulrik and nodded at the trees ahead. The crystals here had grown thinner, exhibiting a less concentrated pattern of growth. Beyond them could be seen rolling dunes of emerald sand. Krom’s ploy had worked – they were through the forest.

Ulrik started to turn, intending to signal to the rest of the company that they were almost out of the forest. As he did so, however, a dark shadow fell across him. The Wolf Priest bit down on the instinct to cry out as he felt powerful talons snatch at him and drag him up into the sky with a sickening lurch.

Craning his head back, Ulrik could see that his attacker was a giant rodent-mosquito creature. There was a monstrous impression of intelligence in its gem-like eyes, a hint of malignant mockery as it stared back at him. He was caught in the grip of a daemon.

The Wolf Priest drew his plasma pistol as the daemon-fly carried him out over the forest. A crackle of sadistic mirth oozed from the creature’s proboscis. The pincers gripping Ulrik abruptly loosened their hold, sending him crashing downwards. As he fell into the midst of the hostile forest, he fired a shot at his foe. The ball of plasma seared upwards, but already the unnatural substance of the daemon was morphing into a new shape, shrinking and twisting into a moth-like being that darted from the path of his shot. The Changeling circled once, as

though to assure itself of its victim's distress, then sped away towards the horizon.

Crashing down through the mineral branches of the trees, the crystalline growths themselves broke the impetus of Ulrik's fall. On their own, the spiny shards were incapable of piercing ceramite plate. It was the murderous velocity with which they were impelled towards prey by the trees that made them a threat. The violence of his descent sent a loud clamour ringing out through the forest. From every direction, trees hurled slivers at the sound.

Ulrik was shielded from the worst of their attentions. The trees he'd struck in his fall had been denuded of spines on those facets that faced him. Instead of posing a direct menace, the disarmed trees became his bastion, absorbing the impacts of the slivers flung at him from deeper in the forest. Even so, many slivers crashed against his armour and three pierced through to dig into his flesh, stabbing him in calf, thigh and forearm. Worse, the ground all around him was strewn with brittle fragments that crumbled at the slightest weight, the crackling sound drawing further salvos from the forest.

The Changeling had flown him far from his comrades, well into the expanse of crystalline spires. Even if they picked up his trail, Ulrik doubted that there were enough grenades in the whole company to reach him and make it back out. He prayed Krom would have sense enough not to risk it. Finding Logan Grimnar was more important than rescuing a foolish old wolf who'd let himself be caught by a daemon's wiles.

Ulrik noticed a sound in the distance. It was the slicing, rending discharge of spines from some of the trees. At intervals, the noise was repeated. He strained his ears, trying to catch the explosive clamour of grenades, but it eluded him. Instead, after a time, he began to hear a faint howl. It was a voice he recognised – that of Krom Dragongaze. Ulrik had known the Space Wolves would never leave him. At the same time, Krom wasn't willing to put the entire hunt at risk and send the whole company back into the forest. It was typical of his pride and bravado that he'd taken it upon himself to seek his missing mentor.

The howls drew closer. Finally Ulrik could see Krom picking his way through the trees. A few spines were caught in his armour and blood dripped from a wound in his side, but the Wolf Lord still presented a miraculous sight. He scowled when he saw the litter of crystal lying all around Ulrik. With one hand he motioned for the Wolf Priest to keep still. Throwing another howl out amongst the trees, Krom brought one boot stamping down on the fallen shards. The crackle of crushed crystal wasn't enough to distract the trees from his feral

cry. Krom waved Ulrik forwards.

Tense minutes followed as the two Space Wolves started back along the trail Krom had blazed. Again and again, the crystalline trees sent their slivers knifing towards them. During a pause, Ulrik shared a worried look with Krom. They still had far to go, yet the violence of the trees was becoming more pronounced. It seemed like the things were adapting to Krom's trick and turning their attentions to the real prey. A shake of the Wolf Lord's head told Ulrik that his friend had reached the same conclusion. As things stood, they'd be ripped to pieces before they made it out.

Abruptly, the trees around them shivered with agitation. They began to loose their shards at some distant point. It was inexplicable, for Krom hadn't thrown one of his howls in that direction. The two Space Wolves knew better than to question their good fortune, however. Whatever had distracted the trees, they would exploit it. Swiftly they dashed ahead, rushing through the grisly trees. Despite their reckless haste, the mineral growths continued to ignore them, firing instead on some target in the distance.

It seemed a boon from Morkai himself that the trees remained indifferent to the Space Wolves until they were clear of the forest. Among the emerald dunes beyond, Ulrik could see their comrades waiting for them. The warriors raised their arms in a silent cheer when they saw the two heroes emerge from the forest. Even with such cause for celebration, they had sense enough not to risk provoking the trees.

Turning his head, Ulrik considered the crystal trees and the peculiar agitation that had come upon them. As he looked out over the strange forest, a faint sound reached his ears. Bitterly, he dismissed it as a trick of the wind – for it seemed to Ulrik that he'd heard the howling of a wolf somewhere in the distance.

The emerald dunes fell away behind the Drakeslayers, giving way to a somehow even more desolate landscape of crumbling mesas and jagged ravines. So bleak were the surroundings that Leoric felt a sense of foreboding and paused the march so that he might consult the bones again. Once more they followed his divinations, their trail leading them through a haunted land of rock hoodoos and burbling geysers.

The march came to an abrupt halt when the land fell away into a wide canyon, stretching away as far as even the sharp eyes of Krom could follow. Lopt walked to the edge of the fissure and tossed a stone down. The rattle and clatter of the falling rock ended in a steaming sizzle. The Space Wolves peered down to watch

as the rock dissolved in a mire of corrosive sludge that carpeted the bottom of the canyon.

‘Morkai take this cursed planet,’ Krom growled. ‘It seems there’s no choice but to go around this damned pit.’

Ulrik shared the disappointment and disgust of his battle-brothers. They’d come through many ordeals to reach this place, travelled far from the halls of the Fang in search of the Great Wolf. Now, when every warrior began to sense the end of their hunt, Dargur had thrown yet another obstacle in their path.

‘There’s a bridge across,’ Lopt offered. The scout indicated a narrow span some thirty yards below the rim that stretched across the middle of the canyon. It was almost ethereal in its slenderness, barely three feet across and scarcely half as thick. The winds in the canyon appeared to have eroded it down to this state and it looked like one more good gale would send the entire span crumbling into the acidic sludge below.

Yet as he studied the bridge, Ulrik was struck not by its fragile appearance but by the material from which it was made. Doubting his eyes, he turned to Leoric.

‘Isn’t that the same crystal Sathar’s prism was made from?’

Leoric was discomfited by the mention of the prism, but the Rune Priest closed his eyes and stretched out his hand. Bone fetishes and tiny runestones dangled from his fingers on leather straps, each talisman shivering in a spectral breeze as Leoric muttered an incantation. After a moment the charms grew still once more and he opened his eyes.

‘You are right,’ he told Ulrik. ‘There is a resonance between that bridge and the prism. The harmony is too distinct to be accidental. The crystal was cut from this span.’

Ulrik turned away, staring out across the expanse of the canyon. The Space Wolves would lose too much time trying to get around the obstacle. The bridge represented the only alternative, but it looked so feeble that even he was hesitant to put it to the test.

The Wolf Priest thought again of Sathar and how the traitor had insisted that he and his Alpha Legion allies remained loyal, albeit in their own deviant fashion. Something Sathar had said came back to him, an admonition that even a Space Marine needed to have faith. Advice? A challenge? Or was it the traitor’s way of testing Ulrik’s trust? Had Sathar sent them this far only to bait them into this trap? Just how far was the traitor prepared to go?

‘I’m going down,’ Ulrik told Krom.

‘It’ll never hold,’ Krom swore. ‘If you insist on testing the thing, let one of us

do it. The Drakeslayers will mourn a lost comrade, but all the Fang will mourn Ulrik the Slayer.'

'I have made my choice,' Ulrik said. 'Sathar knew about this place. I am certain of it. He brought us here as a test of our faith.'

Krom was unconvinced. 'At least let us fashion a rope to haul you back if you're wrong.'

Ulrik lowered himself over the edge of the gorge, sinking his claws into the rock.

'To doubt is to question your own resolve,' he said. 'Faith is to be without question. The bridge will hold, because I believe it will hold.'

Lining the edge of the canyon, the Space Wolves watched as Ulrik picked his way down the side. He could smell the agitation in their scent, the concern that wracked them. There wasn't one who wouldn't have offered himself in the Wolf Priest's place, and there wasn't one who lacked the respect to accept his decision to act on his own. They could only watch as he slowly descended to the crystal bridge.

When Ulrik's boots came to rest upon the narrow span, he felt a thrill course through his body. There was an almost electric shock, a numbing surge that pulsed through his armour. He could feel a dull hum rushing up his feet. The old wolf smiled to himself. This was how the span maintained its cohesion, not through the solidity of its construction but from the magnetic flow of energy that ran through it.

'It is stronger than it looks, brothers,' Ulrik called up to his comrades. He actuated the mag-clamps built into his boots, finding they gripped the bridge as readily as they would the hull of a starship. 'The clamps in your boots will hold you fast to the surface. Let me cross first, then follow one at a time.'

The excited barks and boasts of his comrades rang down from above. Ulrik couldn't quite embrace the acclaim. The Space Wolves were celebrating his courage when it was his belief they should be praising. His faith in a traitor's words, his trust in his own instincts to tell deceit from truth. To venture out onto the span was an act of courage, but not the kind many of his brothers would understand.

The canyon was hours behind them when the Space Wolves noticed the eerie change that had come upon the sky. Upon the purple horizon there now shone a jaundiced glow, a leprous blemish that cast its eerie rays into the atmosphere. Leoric closed his eyes and gripped his rune staff tight. The icy winds of Asaheim

flowed about him as the Rune Priest drew upon the magic of his familiar spirits.

‘There,’ Leoric hissed through clenched fangs. ‘Within that glow our hunt will end.’

‘In victory or disgrace?’ Krom asked.

Ulrik interposed himself between Wolf Lord and Rune Priest.

‘Some questions are best left unasked. If we feed Morkai this day, will knowing it make us retreat from our purpose?’

Krom shook his head at the admonition. ‘You suggest I am either a fool or a coward,’ he grumbled. ‘Only Ulrik would be so bold.’

‘Of all your many faults, my friend,’ Ulrik said, ‘foolishness and cowardice are not numbered among them. I only advise that warriors fight the better if they do not feel the hand of destiny or the claw of doom hovering over them.’

The Wolf Lord pulled at his long beard, digesting his mentor’s counsel. ‘I recant my question, Leoric. Let the future see to itself. Whatever shape it takes, it will bear the marks of our claws!’

The Space Wolves moved out across a blighted plain, shrivelled clutches of cacti the only evidence of life. Gradually, as they drew nearer to the glow, the plain became peppered with jagged heaps of stone, toppled megaliths of almost unfathomable antiquity, their angles contorted to suit the aesthetics of an alien geometry. The scars of an ancient battle marked the fallen constructions, ragged craters blown by missiles and melted pits left by plasma guns. The Space Wolves thought of their Chapter’s history with this world and of Bjorn’s long-ago foray against the xenos inhabitants who claimed Dargur as their own.

Ahead, the Space Wolves could see the desiccated shell of an alien structure, a colossal building with great soaring columns and the decaying fragments of tremendous spires. The moons of Dargur hung in the heavens above, casting their rays down upon the ruin and evoking the eldritch glow from its broken walls. The sight put the Fenrisians on edge, provoking their primal repugnance of all things marked by Chaos.

‘It is a temple,’ Leoric whispered. Blood trickled from the bones he had set into his forehead and there was a ghoulish shine in his eyes, reminding Ulrik of Sathar’s prism. ‘Here the Thnalys held their murderous bacchanals and paid tribute to the Ruinous Powers. Here they sacrificed nations to placate the Dark Gods and preserve themselves from the corruption of the warp.’

‘Bjorn put paid to their xenos wickedness ages ago,’ Krom declared.

Leoric fixed his shining gaze upon the Wolf Lord. ‘Where the Chaos Gods have been honoured once, they may be honoured again.’

Before the Rune Priest could explain more, Lopt came running over to report to Krom. The Wolf Scouts had ranged ahead of the main pack, patrolling the terrain ahead lest Dargur spring still more surprises on them. What he had was a surprise, but for once it was a pleasant one.

‘I’ve caught the Great Wolf’s scent,’ Lopt said, tapping the side of his nose. ‘It hangs heavy about the ruins. The place is thick with the smell of Fenris.’

Krom clapped the scout on the shoulder and smiled at Ulrik. ‘The hunt draws to its end,’ he declared. ‘We’ve found the Great Wolf and his companions.’

‘Yes,’ Ulrik agreed, ‘but we don’t know what holds them here. That is a riddle we’ve yet to solve.’

‘It will be solved,’ Krom growled, drawing Wyrmfang. ‘It will be solved with blades and guns! No, old wolf, do not try to hold me back. For too long our kin have been kept from us. Now let whatever force holds the Great Wolf discover what it means to trifle with the Sons of Russ!’

Ulrik could feel the rest of the Drakeslayers rising to the agitation of their Wolf Lord. The hunt had been long and arduous, dragging them across the stars. Now that the end was in sight, their discipline was being overcome by their more feral instincts. The Wolf Priest made an appeal to Krom, playing upon the respect and admiration in which the young Wolf Lord held his old mentor.

‘Now, at the end of things, is when caution is most needed,’ Ulrik warned. ‘We must spy out the terrain, discover what it is that has kept Logan Grimnar from returning to the Fang. We must learn the challenge that awaits us.’

Slowly, grudgingly, Krom bowed his head and returned his axe to his belt. ‘As ever, old wolf, your wisdom makes me feel like an impetuous Blood Claw fresh from the Trials of Morkai.’

There was still a smell of impatience in Krom’s scent, in the scent of all the Drakeslayers, but for the moment, at least, it was curbed, held in check by their discipline.

‘Then let us find what has befallen the Great Wolf and see for ourselves how this hunt will end,’ Ulrik said. He motioned for Lopt to lead them towards the ruins, to follow Logan Grimnar’s scent into the alien temple.

It was only a matter of minutes before the Space Wolves stood beneath the temple’s shattered roof. They crept around the cyclopean columns, slipping into the shadows of broken walls. To their right rose a great shelf-like tier of platforms, to the left the crumbling rubble of a gargantuan altar. Before them, arrayed in a great concentric spiral, were jagged pillars, their capitals still supporting fragments of the collapsed roof.

Details of the architecture held the interest of the Space Wolves for but the briefest moment, however. It was the figures chained to the pillars that claimed their attention – massive, hulking shapes far larger than the hooded men that pranced around them with gleaming knives. The hearts of each Space Wolf froze when their eyes settled upon one of the captives. None of them could mistake the snowy mane of hair or the long pleated moustaches, the sharp hawk-like nose and thick craggy brow. They had found Logan Grimnar and some of his warriors. The missing Space Wolves had been taken prisoner, stripped of their armour and readied as sacrifices. The Fenrisians had been savagely beaten, many of them slumping unconscious in their chains.

‘The ritual on Stratovass Ultra,’ Leoric hissed. ‘They are seeking to perform the same rite, using the lives of our brothers to fuel their spell!’ Blood stained his face, bubbling up from the runes etched into the wolf bones piercing his flesh. ‘There is something more. A presence...’

The Rune Priest’s distress was unnoticed by the Drakeslayers. Krom and his warriors had heard Leoric’s words, and that had been enough for them to abandon all restraint. Seizing their weapons and howling their battle cries, the pack rushed towards the pillars, intent upon freeing their captured brothers and annihilating the enemies who dared to hold them prisoner.

Ulrik cried out to Krom, urging the Space Wolves back. His words were too late, however. They were already committed, and hurled themselves upon the foe with the ferocity of thunderwolves. Axes and swords sheared through the hooded men, and claws slashed the cultists to bloody ribbons. Bolt pistols barked, exploding heads and chests with each shot. The cough of a flamer was punctuated by the shrieks of burning heretics.

The Wolf Priest rose from the stricken Leoric, shaking his head in dismay. Lost in their fury, the Drakeslayers were oblivious to the ease of their combat. They didn’t question how such feeble foes could have overcome Logan Grimnar and his warriors. The realisation would come to them soon, but by then Ulrik feared it would be too late.

Below, Krom had reached the pillar to which Logan Grimnar was chained. Casting aside the gory remains of a cultist, the Wolf Lord brought his axe whipping around to sever the Great Wolf’s bonds. As he did so, there was a thunderous crash and a blinding flash of purple light. Wyrmfang was torn from Krom’s hand and sent clattering across the ground. He glared at the pillar, then barked a warning to his warriors. So near to their comrades, so close to victory, and their triumph was being snatched away from them. Some infernal barrier

surrounded the captives, a sorcerous shell they couldn't pierce.

Anger and frustration gripped the Drakeslayers. They lashed out at the corpses around them, venting their fury. As their rage swelled, monstrous laughter rippled through the temple.

Upon the tiers, armoured shapes appeared, manifesting with such suddenness that it was as though a veil had been thrown aside. There was no mistaking their gilded armour and the vane-like crest that framed their helms. They were Traitor Space Marines of the Thousand Sons. Dozens of them spread out across the tiers, their guns trained upon the Space Wolves below.

Towering over the Thousand Sons, a malicious cackle still bubbling from its blackened beaks, was an even more monstrous foe, an enemy steeped in the worst infamies recorded in the sagas. It had the withered body of a colossus, great wings stretching out from its back, mighty talons tipping each of its shrivelled claws, and two heads perched upon scrawny, vulturine necks, their eyes swirling pits of magic and madness. Clapsed within one monstrous fist was a massive staff of ivory and gold, a monstrous tome of obscene lore chained at its apex.

Ulrik felt a surge of loathing and horror rush through him. The thing was nothing less than the Oracle of Tzeentch, the daemon known as Kairos Fateweaver.

The daemon lord's mockery reverberated through the shattered temple, each echo adopting fresh nuances of cadence and tone. Kairos stretched forth its staff, the pages of the ghastly book rustling in an arcane wind. It pointed the staff downwards at Krom.

'Thirteen to feed the spell,' the daemon's left head cried while its counterpart shrieked the same words in reverse.

From the heights of the tiers, the Thousand Sons opened fire upon the Space Wolves. Ambushed by the Chaos Space Marines, the Drakeslayers scrambled for cover, seeking shelter behind the pillars and the shattered rubble from the altar.

Still on the periphery of the temple, Ulrik and his strike force seemed to have gone unnoticed by the Thousand Sons and their daemoniac master. Hastily, Ulrik split his command into two forces, sending half the warriors to circle around the temple and strike the opposite flank. He would lead the rest against their foe from the nearer side. He had no delusions about the kind of damage they could inflict upon so many Chaos Space Marines and a greater daemon, but he hoped they might sow enough confusion to grant Krom and his warriors enough respite to recover.

As Ulrik led his handful of warriors towards the side of the temple, he found that their presence wasn't as unnoticed as he'd hoped. Spheres of purple light crackled through the air overhead, swiftly coalescing into vicious ray-like shapes. Swimming through the air on lobed flukes, the grisly daemons shrieked wrathfully.

Knowing the daemons had taken from them the element of surprise, the Space Wolves unleashed a fusillade of bolter fire into the monstrosities. Ulrik blasted his plasma pistol into the flying daemons, burning one of them from the jaundiced sky. For every daemon they brought down, it seemed there were two left to swoop down upon them. The Wolf Priest saw one Grey Hunter crushed to the ground beneath a screaming fiend. A Blood Claw had one of his arms bitten in two by the snapping jaws of another.

Ulrik met his own attackers with his crozius. The maul crackled as it tore through one diving daemon, exploding it in a burst of ichor and light. A second monstrosity had its fanged maw ripped open by the weapon, its mangled form lifting back into the air with broken fangs dripping from its mouth. The third daemon-ray, however, prevailed where the others had met failure. Its hurtling mass slammed into Ulrik, smashing him to the ground. The Wolf Priest could feel its jaws snapping against the back of his helm, trying to find some weakness it could exploit.

A fierce howl rang out and the daemon's crushing weight no longer pinned him. Rolling onto his side, Ulrik saw a feral shape of fangs and claws ripping into his daemoniac adversary. He blinked in disbelief at the battered war-worn armour that clung to the savage figure, recognising it to be an old pattern of power armour.

Similar fearsome creatures were helping the others, springing up from behind the rubble to pull daemons out of the sky. Hairy, half-human brutes crushed the daemons to the ground and savaged them with flashing claws, ripping gibbets of corrupt flesh from their monstrous bodies. One of the daemons, seeking to flee, was burned from the sky by a bolt of crimson lightning.

Ulrik turned from the grim spectacle of the feral creatures to see the warrior who'd saved him. He found himself gazing upon an old Rune Priest, his patched armour displaying a riotous disarray of styles and patterns, each piece daubed with protective marks and runes.

As for the bestial fighters, Ulrik wondered, could they be Wulfen? The afflicted beasts were rarely seen. Driven wild by the fault in their gene-seed, they were a secret source of shame that the Chapter usually tried to keep hidden. Ulrik had

never heard of the creatures amassing in such a number – apart from in the case of the fabled Thirteenth Company...

‘My thanks for your intervention, but my brothers are beset by enemies within the temple,’ Ulrik told the Rune Priest.

The old warrior nodded his head. Turning towards the ravaging Wulfen, he uttered a sharp bark. The half-human creatures swung around, locking eyes with the Rune Priest before loping off once more. They hurled themselves at the walls, digging their claws into the old masonry and pulling themselves upwards. Ulrik watched them climb for a moment, then rallied his own men and hurried to the gap that had been their objective.

When the Wolf Priest reached the base of the tiered platforms, he found the Thousand Sons slowly advancing upon Krom’s besieged forces. The twin-headed Kairos hung back from the fighting, content to direct its minions and loose the occasional spell against a hapless Drakeslayer. The ambush was slowly closing around Krom, forcing his warriors to abandon the cover of the altar as the Chaos Space Marines brought their heavy weapons to bear.

Then, from their rear, the Thousand Sons found themselves beset by a foe even more ferocious than the Drakeslayers. The Wulfen came charging down the platforms, flinging themselves upon the stunned traitors with animalistic viciousness. Bestial claws ripped into gilded armour, tearing it from the ancient traitors. Finding only emptiness within the armour increased the frenzied wrath of the Wulfen.

The Thousand Sons retaliated with emotionless precision. While a few of their warriors moved to form a perimeter, those behind unleashed a withering stream of fire into the feral warriors. Two of the Wulfen were ripped apart under the salvo. A third was reduced to a mangled pile of meat even as he was pulling down one of the Chaos Space Marines.

It was Ulrik and his warriors who now aided the Wulfen. Their fire served as a distraction to the Thousand Sons, diverting some of their attention away from the feral creatures. When Leoric and the rest of the Space Wolves appeared at the far side of the temple, the fire from the Thousand Sons was split still further. Unlike their monstrous allies, the Space Wolves were able to duck back down behind the outer walls and gain some protection from the vengeful attentions of their foes. Even so, the Chaos Space Marines were leeching away at their strength, picking off the odd Grey Hunter or Blood Claw who was too slow to seek the protection of the walls.

With their foes reeling from the surprise assault of the Wulfen, Krom rallied his

own warriors. Rushing out from behind the pillars, the Drakeslayers added their fire to the savage assault unfolding in the tiers. It was the Thousand Sons who now found themselves trapped. They fought with the determination of the damned, but their casualties were mounting. One after another their shattered armour was clattering down from the tiers and the dust of their mortal essence was drifting away on the wind.

Kairos glared with its gibbous eyes at the packs ravening all around it. A spell from one of its talons reduced a Grey Hunter to a charred smear. A bolt of flame from one of its beaks transformed a Long Fang into a pile of steaming meat. From its staff, a crackling whip of power flayed flesh and fur from one of the Wulfen, leaving its bloodied carcass strewn across the temple. More and more, however, as its minions fell, the daemon was compelled to employ its magic to defend itself, to ward away the salvos of missiles and bolter fire that were directed against it.

In the midst of the carnage, Ulrik spotted one of the Thousand Sons turning to fire at a chained Space Wolf. The Chaos Space Marine blew apart the captive's head. The sight filled Ulrik with rage. Snapping a shot from his plasma pistol, he blew apart the murderous traitor.

Ulrik turned to the nearest of the Wulfen, locking eyes with the ferocious creature. More by gesture than word, he indicated to the feral warrior his plan.

'Try to break their chains,' he told the half-beast. The Wulfen growled, but to his relief went loping down towards the pillars. Ulrik prayed to Morkai that these strange warriors would be able to succeed where Krom had not before any more of the Thousand Sons decided to kill their prisoners.

'Krom,' Ulrik called out across the vox. 'Have your warriors cover the Wulfen. I'm hoping he can break the chains.'

Ulrik's command was quickly executed. Krom's Drakeslayers concentrated their shots on the Thousand Sons who were trying to bring down the Wulfen loping towards the pillars. The Chaos Space Marines were forced back, denied the opportunity to pick off their target. The Wulfen reached the temple floor and sprang to the nearest pillar. As Ulrik had predicted, his claws had no problem seizing hold of the chains and breaking them. The first of Logan Grimnar's companions was free.

Other Wulfen now seized upon Ulrik's idea. Great as their savagery towards the Thousand Sons had been, loyalty to their pack was an even greater force within them. In ones and twos they broke away from the fighting, rushing down to free the Champions of Fenris.

A grisly shriek of rage rose from the beaks of Kairos. The huge daemon lunged for the Wulfen, seizing the warrior moving to break the chains binding Logan Grimnar. Fateweaver's clutch transformed the snarling fighter into a bloody paste. While the Wulfen perished, Krom rushed to finish the job, Wyrmfang once more in his hands to strike a blow against the Great Wolf's chains. Kairos saw him and lashed out, seeking to seize hold of the Wolf Lord.

Before it could act, Kairos was assaulted by an elemental storm. Thunderous bolts rained down upon the daemon, driving it back. The fiend fixed its baleful gaze upon Leoric. The instant Leoric faltered, Fateweaver sent magic of its own blasting into the Space Wolf. He cried out as the destructive energies seared through him. His eyes exploded in a blaze of fire, the flames swiftly reducing his face to a leering skull.

Fixated upon Leoric, Kairos now found itself beset on all sides by its other foes. Those Wulfen not freeing the captives were helping to dispatch the last Thousand Sons. The full force of the Drakeslayers was now turned upon the Lord of Change. Shrieking in rage, the giant monster reached out with its claw, tearing a hole in the air behind it. The next instant, the creature had slipped through the rent in reality.

‘Don't let it escape!’

The command rang out across the chamber. All eyes turned upon the bloodied figure of Logan Grimnar. This time Krom's axe had succeeded in breaking his chains. The Great Wolf waved his fist at the vanished daemon. ‘It holds more of our brothers beyond the barrier!’

Ulrik was the first to reach the boiling rent through which the daemon had vanished. The Rune Priest who led the Wulfen was the second. Closing his eyes and raising his staff, the Wulfen compelled the rent to stay open. He cast an imploring look at the Wolf Priest, urging him on. Ulrik didn't hesitate, but rushed through the portal.

Beyond the doorway was another world, a ghastly ruin of floating plateaus suspended within a skyscape of shimmering incandescent vapour. Close to the rent, surrounded by broken battlements, was a circle of petrified trees, their stony bark etched with sinister, cabalistic designs. To each of the trees, just like the pillars in the alien temple, one of Logan Grimnar's Great Company was chained. Ulrik stared in shock when he saw that one of the captives had an all-too familiar mane of snowy hair and long pleated moustaches. Somehow, in this world, Logan Grimnar was still a prisoner!

Kairos was stalking towards the trees when its left head swung about, eyes

widening in surprise as it saw Ulrik running out of the rent.

‘I did not foresee this.’ The daemon’s voices somehow conveyed a tone of unease. It started towards Ulrik, raising its staff. Then it reeled back, crying out as it saw other warriors rushing out of the rent. The Wulfen howled with fury as they caught the daemon’s scent, charging at the monster in a frenzied mob.

With the daemon focused upon the Wulfen, Ulrik charged for the pillars. Raising his crozius, he brought the maul cracking against the chains binding Logan Grimnar to the stone. An electric shock coursed through his body, almost tearing the crozius from his hand. Staggering back, Ulrik tried to fight down the numbness that dragged at his mind. It was the sight of the Great Wolf, the confidence that shone in his eyes as he saw Ulrik beside him, that gave the Wolf Priest the determination to fight through the effects of the sorcerous shield.

Tightening both hands about the grip of his crozius, Ulrik brought the weapon crashing against the chains once more. Again there was a tremendous shock, a searing pain that flared through every nerve in his body. This time, however, the chains snapped. Logan Grimnar’s body sagged forwards, but the Great Wolf had enough strength left in him to keep from crashing face first into the dirt.

A baleful roar thundered across the floating plateau. Ulrik spun around, putting himself between the source of that enraged cry and the weakened Great Wolf. Kairos fixed him with each of its baleful eyes. The daemon’s malignance slammed into Ulrik like a physical blow.

‘You’ll not cheat me of my prize,’ Kairos snapped. A sphere of swirling flame erupted from its outstretched claw, leaping towards the Wolf Priest.

Ulrik held his ground, ready to die to protect Logan Grimnar. As the fiery sphere hurtled towards him, he could feel his skin blister inside his armour. Before it could engulf him entirely, the malefic conjuration dissolved into a fizzle of sparks. Ulrik saw one of the Wulfen climbing his way up the daemon’s arm, tearing feathers and flesh away with each rake of his claws. The sudden attack had broken the monster’s concentration, sparing Ulrik at the last moment.

‘Make for the portal,’ Ulrik told Logan Grimnar, gesturing towards the rent. ‘I’ll keep the daemon busy.’ Before the Great Wolf could object, Ulrik was already rushing towards Kairos.

The Fateweaver plucked the Wulfen from its savaged arm. The feral warrior’s body writhed in a hideous fashion as Kairos focused its malignance upon him. Bones rippled in obscene displays, flesh bubbled and flowed like water. What had been a fearsome warrior was reduced to a confusion of ruptured tissue under the daemon’s magic.

Kairos' right head spotted Ulrik as the Wolf Priest came charging towards it. The fiend shrieked in primordial rage, dipping its staff to direct the relic's hideous power against him. Before the daemon could work its magic, Ulrik threw himself forwards in a desperate lunge. His arm wrapped about the ivory and gold length of the staff. He could feel the mutating energies of Kairos' conjuration rippling through the shaft and seeking to penetrate his own armour.

'Foolish mortal!' Kairos cackled, peering at the Wolf Priest. 'You cannot hurt me.'

Ulrik glared back at the daemon, the fiend that had caused his Chapter so much sacrifice.

'Maybe not,' he barked back, 'but what about this!' He slammed his crozius down against the immense tome lashed to the ivory rod. Ancient pages were ripped free by the blow, sent skittering away across the plateau.

Kairos cried out in shock, lunging after the torn pages. Laughing, Ulrik repeated his attack, ripping another fistful of sheets from the tome. The daemon's left head fixed upon him, the eyes blazing with unspeakable hatred. It started to raise its claw, to pluck him forcibly from the staff, but even as it did, the daemon's right head shouted in alarm. The Wulfen that had been darting about its legs, biting and clawing at the fiend, now gave up that pursuit, instead rushing after the scattered pages.

'My book,' Kairos squawked. Whirlwinds sprang from its eyes, whipping around the Wulfen, trying to catch the pages before the savage creatures could.

Ulrik seized upon the daemon's distress, sending still more pages fluttering away from its book. Kairos, unwilling to risk any magic that might harm his precious pages, could only try and shake its foe loose by whipping its staff back and forth.

Ulrik endured the vicious motion, biding his time until he saw his chance. As Kairos shook the staff towards its body, the Wolf Priest released his hold. Momentum sent him crashing against the daemon, the flanges of his crozius slashing the feathered flesh of its shoulder. Ulrik grabbed a fistful of Kairos' robe, trying to use it to arrest his fall while he brought his maul cracking against the fiend's neck. Ichor oozed up from the gash he inflicted, but before he could strike again, the daemon used its mighty wings to rise into the air. The huge pinions beat at him, breaking his tenuous hold and sending him plummeting to the plateau.

The Wolf Priest felt bones break as he slammed into the ground. Clenching his fangs against the pain, he forced himself up, drawing his plasma pistol and

making ready to meet the daemon's next assault.

The attack didn't come. Conjuring more of its whirlwinds, Kairos was focused upon snatching the pages Ulrik had knocked loose from its tome.

'Keep today, whelps of Russ. For I have seen tomorrow!' Kairos roared. Again, the daemon stretched forth its claw, ripping a hole through reality into which it could retreat.

Ulrik glared after the escaping daemon.

'Take heart that you thwarted its purpose,' the weary voice of Logan Grimnar came to Ulrik. He turned around to find the venerable warrior limping towards him. Behind the Great Wolf came the rest of his warriors, freed from their chains by the Wulfen. 'Its intention was to open a permanent doorway between the Eye of Terror and Fenris. By using the spirits of Space Wolves to power its ritual, the daemon could have created such a gate.'

'Will it try again?' Ulrik wondered.

Logan Grimnar frowned. 'We'll have to make sure it doesn't get the chance.' He scowled at the rent through which Kairos had retreated. 'If I had my armour and the Axe of Morkai, I'd chase the wretched creature down right now.' He turned a worried look to Ulrik. 'Did you find the rest of my warriors? Are they safe?'

Ulrik started to answer when he saw a figure emerge from the rent leading to Dargur. It was the old Rune Priest in the ancient armour. As he joined them, he bowed low to Logan Grimnar. A low growl rattled at the back of the wizened warrior's throat as he pointed firmly at the Great Wolf and then at the portal to Dargur. Tapping himself on the chest, he pointed to the rent through which Kairos had fled. Both portals were slowly starting to close.

'I think he means us to hurry back to our comrades and leave the pursuit of Kairos to his pack,' Ulrik said.

Logan Grimnar didn't seem to hear the Wolf Priest at first, staring instead at the symbol adorning the Rune Priest's armour.

'We must hurry, my lord,' Ulrik said, recalling the scene he'd left behind. It was impossible that Logan Grimnar could be both here and on the other side of the rent. One had to be an imposter. Which one was the problem that now faced him.

Logan Grimnar said something to the Rune Priest. Ulrik couldn't make out his words, but the only response was a shake of the warrior's head and another gesture towards the portal Kairos had escaped into. Frowning, the Great Wolf nodded.

'Brothers, let us be gone from this place,' he called to the other Space Wolves.

Ulrik waited until the last of Logan Grimnar's warriors was through before slipping into the rent himself. It seemed to be collapsing around him as he clawed his way between worlds. Reality itself was bleeding away, and for a hideous moment he felt the enormity of nothingness reach out for him. Then something far more physical caught hold of him. A fierce grip closed about his arm and pulled him from the rent.

'I'm not staging another Great Hunt to look for you,' Krom cursed as he dragged Ulrik from the rent. The wound in reality closed up behind him. The Wolf Priest had narrowly escaped being lost within the void.

'You'd have the Great Wolf to help you,' Ulrik said. The comment brought a severe look to Krom's visage.

'Which one?' he grumbled. Krom pointed at the Space Wolves Ulrik had sent through the rent. Logan Grimnar stood among them. But there was another Logan Grimnar who stood with the captives rescued on Dargur. Of the two, it was the Logan Grimnar of Dargur who presented the more convincing aspect, arrayed as he was in power armour and with the Axe of Morkai clenched in his hands. He glared at the Logan Grimnar Ulrik had rescued.

'You've been gone six days,' Krom reported. The Wolf Priest shook his head. It was almost unbelievable that so much time could have passed here when it had only been a few moments on the other side. If the Logan Grimnar of Dargur was an imposter, he'd had a good amount of time to convince the other Space Wolves otherwise.

All around them, weapons at the ready, stood the warriors who'd risked so much to rescue these men. They were a grim sight, their faces hard – for these were warriors who'd just had the taste of victory turn to ash in their mouths.

'One of our Great Wolves is an imposter,' Ulrik said. 'If I hadn't gone through the rent, its deception might have succeeded.'

Logan Grimnar of Dargur pointed at his opposite. 'Or the daemon decided upon this deceit only when its plan here was thwarted. If it can't open a doorway between here and Fenris, the next best thing would be to leave one of its minions in control of the Fang.'

Logan Grimnar from beyond the rent bared his fangs. 'You wear my armour and hold my axe. Tell me, if you were a cunning daemon, would you leave such things within reach of the Great Wolf or would you have them available for your spy?'

'There is one certain way to tell them apart,' Ulrik abruptly declared, stepping between the two Logan Grimnars. 'We can have Krom's wolf Vangandyr sniff

them. A daemon might be able to trick a Fenrisian's senses, but it can't deceive a cyberwolf.'

Both of the Great Wolves frowned when Ulrik made his statement. It was the Logan Grimnar of Dargur who answered first. 'We are both so drenched in the stench of Chaos, I would be surprised if he knew the scent of either of us.'

The Logan Grimnar from beyond the portal laughed. 'A nice effort, but you are fooled,' he told his double, 'for Vangandyr is a thunderwolf, not a cyberwolf.'

'I knew I could count on you to know your wolves,' Ulrik said. He spun around, his crozius slamming against the imposter's hand even as he began to lift the Axe of Morkai. An inhuman wail of fury sounded from the false Logan Grimnar as its stolen visage began to slide and flow into a soup of twisted flesh. The Changeling lashed out from within the Great Wolf's armour, a writhing coil of voidstuff whipping about Ulrik's neck. Before it could tighten, the real Logan Grimnar pulled the Axe of Morkai from the ground and brought its magic blade chopping down. The daemon's distorted head went flying from its shoulders to land among the standing stones, where it faded to nothing. The coil wrapped about Ulrik's throat lost coherence, writhing and ebbing away. The empty shell of power armour crashed forwards with a clatter onto the ancient stones.

'Do you think it's dead?' Krom asked Ulrik.

The Wolf Priest shook his head. 'With daemons it is never easy to tell.' Inwardly, he doubted the Changeling was gone, merely abandoning a disguise it no longer had use for.

Logan Grimnar stood glaring down at his armour. 'Taking my face is one thing, but taking my armour is too much. I'll have to polish it for a decade to get the stink out.' Looking up, the Great Wolf smiled at the warriors who had come so far and risked so much to find him.

'Brothers, let's be on our way,' Logan Grimnar declared. 'It's been too long since I've had the smell of Asaheim in my nose and the taste of Fenrisian mead on my tongue.'

As the Space Wolves withdrew from the alien temple, bearing their wounded and carrying their dead, Ulrik felt his eyes drawn to the mound of stone beneath which they'd entombed the fallen Wulfen. Somehow it felt wrong to leave them behind.

'You seem troubled, old friend,' Logan Grimnar told Ulrik when he caught him looking back towards the cromlech.

'They were brothers in arms,' Ulrik said. 'It sits ill with me to leave them here.'

‘This was their hunting ground,’ the Great Wolf said. ‘Their work here is not complete.’ Logan Grimnar shifted uneasily in the borrowed armour he wore.

‘They were of our gene-seed? They were Sons of Russ?’ Ulrik asked. ‘Were you able to communicate with their leader?’

Logan Grimnar nodded slowly.

‘What did you ask their Rune Priest?’

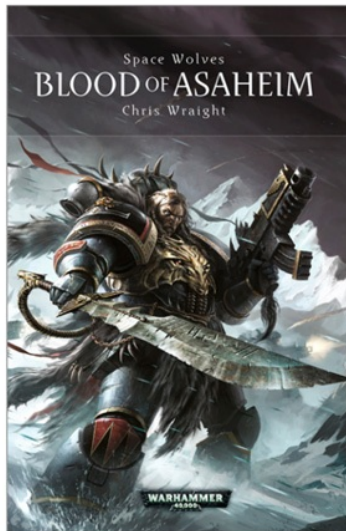
‘I asked him if they were the Thirteenth Great Company,’ Logan Grimnar answered. ‘He said that Great Company is a legend.’ The Great Wolf stared into Ulrik’s eyes. ‘And a legend is how they must remain.’

Ulrik nodded, casting one last look at the cromlech. ‘Yes, they are legend,’ he said.

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 – Wrath of the Wolf ©
Copyright Games Workshop Limited 2016. Legends of the Dark
Millennium: Space Wolves – Wrath of the Wolf, 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: 978-1-78251-957-7

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.