



WARHAMMER
40,000

HUNT-SENSE

A SPACE WOLVES TERMINATORS STORY
BY CHRIS WRAIGHT



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He was driven by hunger. It flailed at him, clawing at the inside of an empty belly, making him move faster and search harder. His vision had become sharp from privation, even in the deep winter night which glowered around him. Everything was more real, more defined, made vivid by his need.

He stopped running, panting heavily, leaning against the bole of the nearest tree. Ahead of him ran the snow, shin deep, glowing blue-white under canopy-obscured stars. The trees soared above him, their bases massive and ridged, slick as oil, glistening faintly. The gaps between the trunks were pure black pools into which light tumbled and was devoured. The thick cover above choked off most of the rest of it, leaving only the streaks and patches of luminous snow underfoot.

He could feel sweat on his back. Dangerous to pause – if he cooled down too fast his muscles would seize up. If he seized up, he would not make it back out of the forest. The heavy furs over his shoulders would only ward the night's chill for so long. He needed fire to warm his bones, and meat to fuel them.

Flesh. The idea made him salivate. It made his stomach snarl and his hands tremble. He couldn't remember when he'd last eaten well. His people would be waiting for him, back up on the high moors, shivering around the fire pit, waiting for the hunter to return, dragging a carcass behind him. The old rune-reader would be scrabbling around for signs of his fate, and the whelps would be screaming from their own famishment.

But he could not think of them now; all there was now was the hunt, the chase, the dark and the light, the smells, the faint sounds, the feel of the earth under his feet.

He sniffed deep, flaring his nostrils, risking the intake of more cold air for a whiff of his prey out in the dark. Snow-heavy branches creaked above him, and

the wind skirled across the broken ground like a ghost. The chill was complete, a vice that locked all living things in its deadening embrace.

The beast was there, somewhere, out amid the towering pillars of trees, hunkered down, breathing huskily amongst some lattice of broken thorns, waiting for him.

He angled his head, trying to gauge distance, direction, putting himself into the mind of the pursued.

Hunt-sense, Ulfán had called it long ago: slipping into the mind of the prey, seeing where it would run, charting the invisible paths of fate as they wound along the narrow paths of the solid world. The hunters who prospered all had it – they could tap into the wyrd of the beast, just as the *gothi* tapped into the wyrd of men.

He sniffed again, feeling the weight of the canopy in the heights, smothering all but the biting wind. He might as well have been underground, locked in the underverse, trapped in the caverns that wormed and gaped under the restless surface of Fenris.

This forest was younger than he was, but the trees were already a hundred feet tall, writhing and gnarled as they thrust towards the scant light, rigid as bone, solid as iron. If he went onwards, the forest would close around him further, forcing him down the clogged paths that bristled with hoarfrost and had thorns that could punch a hole in a man's stomach. The beast would be down one of those, panting, purring, coiled for the spring. It would know he was coming for it.

He gripped his axe. As he moved it, scratched runes on the blade-face caught the starlight – thin lines of silver.

He had named it himself, spiting the gothi who should have reserved that honour for himself. *Skulbrotsjór*, he had chosen. Skull-breaker. It felt light in his hands – just a shaft of wood, an iron blade wedged through the cleave and bound with leather. Not much of a weapon, but the winter had been hard and they had had to scratch and scavenge for what they could.

Guide this blade, he offered, glancing skywards for a moment, glimpsing a scatter of stars in the narrow break between the branches, not knowing whether the gods of slaughter and luck would be ghosting through the high airs that night.

Then he pushed off again, flitting between the trees, his long hair rippling.

They infiltrated via the Thunderhawk *Helspite*.

The Chapter's war-scryers had identified an old void-facing hangar on one of the jumble of hulls and accumulated space debris that made up the hulk's outer skin, and the gunship's battlecannon was potent enough to gain entry.

On the flight in, wheeling under the hulk's flank, Gunnlaugur had been able to observe its face at close range, soaring away in every direction, mottled by age and horror, still glimmering from the wisps of aether that glowed like corpse-gas across its tortured expanse.

There was no data on the interior configuration, no archive records of previous sightings, no tactical return from sensor-sweeps of the exterior. The behemoth might have been lost in the warp for millennia, or mere centuries. It might have been empty and echoing, or it might have been crawling with xenos. Indeed, it might have been nothing more than a vast asteroid but for the vanes and turrets protruding from the ossified binding matter. Starships were buried there, some as old as the Imperium, some perhaps older. As they neared and the viewports filled with its scabrous shell, Gunnlaugur felt the hairs on the back of his neck rise.

Maleficarum. The hulk had been vomited from the warp, and the stink of old aether reached out across the void, triggering the same reaction it always did. He gripped the shaft of his thunder hammer tighter, channelling the kill-urge into something more focused.

Helpspite slipped under the shadow of the shattered hangar aperture, pushing hard on thrusters to hold position. Inside the gunship's crew-bay, red lumens bled into the dark and warning lights danced across the embarkation ramp's hatchway.

'The Hand of Russ,' came the pilot's voice over the pack-comm, and the void-locks blew, sending the ramp slamming down. 'Hunt well.'

Gunnlaugur was first out, crashing down the ridged metal in his Terminator war-plate, savouring the immense heft and craft of it as he moved. His four pack mates came down with him, each in the same ice-grey ceramite, their footfalls heavy and ponderous.

Helpspite turned on its thrusters, manoeuvring tightly in the confined hangar shell, before blasting clear again, ready to hold guard-station two hundred kilometres distant.

The hulk had been given the name *The Sorrows of the Just* by Imperial taxonomers ever since it had appeared on the long-range augurs of the Lophrax Sector's military deep-void stations. The standard protocol assistance requests had gone out soon afterwards, resulting in the mobilisation of the Space Wolves

kill-team *eldurstjorm* from proximal duties. The timing had been auspicious: it allowed infiltration long before the hulk rolled into inhabited space, giving the pack time to clear its foetid depths before the explorator teams from Adeptus Mechanicus response stations were due to arrive.

The Terminators fell into pack formation: Gunnlaugur, Slay and Arfól in the centre with close-combat weapons – thunder hammer, lightning claws, power sword and storm shield – and Variiek and Fjurn flanking with storm bolter and assault cannon.

The hangar's atmosphere had blown out on entry, and there were no sounds outside his own armour. The hulk's gravity field was erratic, generated perhaps by ancient devices buried in the conglomeration's heart, and they used compensators in their armour to keep them securely anchored. The Wolf Guard pack advanced slowly and silently, crunching across the hangar floor, overlooked by ancient buttresses and age-withered support columns.

Gunnlaugur heard the cycle of his respirators, the slow *thud, thud* of his hearts, the ambient throb of the colossal power packs, the whine of his servo-joints flexing. The helm readings scrolling across his visual field were unfamiliar – a far older design than the standard helm he usually wore, with obscure sigils glowing across a foreign tactical screen.

Ahead of them loomed a portal, broken open by the impact of *Helspite's* destructive entry and gaping like an open mouth. It was perfectly black within, unbroken even by the faint light of the starfield beyond.

Gunnlaugur activated his helm-lumens with a blinked command, throwing pools of silver light across the jagged interior. As he did so, he remembered another hunt, by moonlight, carrying a blade that had also been called *skulbrotsjór*.

But only for a second. As he advanced, he felt the first tremors running along the metal floor, picked up by both his armour-sensors and his own alertness. Things were already moving, unfurling, dropping, scuttling, scraping. He could see them in his mind's eye – down in the depths, awakened by the impact of the pack's insertion, opening alien lids and extending incisor-crammed jaws.

It would not be long.

He ran harder. His body briefly forgot its hunger-pangs, fuelled by adrenalin and ancestral anger. He could smell the quarry now – the musk of wolf, matted and pungent, as wet as a dog's hide, sticky with blood. Had it killed? Or was it wounded?

He swerved around the knotted roots of a monstrous trunk, plunging down between snow-shivered branches. His feet were bleeding, his boots lacerated by the rocks below. Layers of bindings had slipped from his hands, making his fingers raw where they clutched the axe.

The land fell away steeply, dropping towards a frozen gulch-bed thick with trees and thorn bushes. The vast shapes blurred past him, hazy in the gloom. He navigated by smell and touch, crouching under branches, leaping over boulders, skidding on the glass-dark ice and crunching through piled snow.

His lungs were painful now, strained by the frigid air and the exertion. He was looking everywhere as he ran, switching his head from side to side, peering into the murk as if he could prise it apart with his mind.

Think. Trace the land. Where would it go?

Ahead of him ran a crooked path to the gulch-bed, barred by thorns that looked like crossed swords. To the left was a rising granite cliff, glinting with embedded ice and crowned with heaps of snow. To the right were more trees, marching off in ranks like the columns in a jarl's hall.

He sniffed, but the scent was everywhere now. The path leading down beckoned him, promising to unearth the lair. He almost went down it, tripping and sliding along the steep incline.

He scraped to a halt, kicking up snow, and looked up at the cliff-face to his left – an axe-throw high, broken by a crack in the centre. He could climb it.

You came this way. You saw this place. You saw the chance to pounce.

He leapt at the first handhold and started to clamber. The ice made his fingers freeze, the stone cut his flesh. He gripped his axe in his teeth, and ascended rapidly. As he went, he smelled the hot stink of wolf on the ice, and knew it had come this way.

He crested the summit, scrambling hard to get to his feet, to get the axe into his hands. A flat surface ran away from him, piled with starlit drifts.

His heart leapt when he saw the tracks – heavy treads, a pad and four claws, pressed down deep. He started to run along their path, sprinting across the summit of the rise, heading towards another bank of frozen briars crowned with arm-length thorns.

He saw the eyes too late, held low under the twisted branch-mass, waiting for him to run past along the line of the tracks, watching him go, following the hunt-sense.

He twisted around, swinging his axe, but the beast moved first. It burst out of cover, devouring the space between them in two bounds, jaws wide, trailing

saliva, shaking the snow with its roars. It was as tall as he was at the shoulder, a monster, a blackmane, clad in corded muscle, hunched and heavy-boned.

He didn't have time. It moved so fast, crashing into him, snapping at his arms, trying to rip his throat out and drag him down. Somehow, he managed to slash his axe across its face, divert the snap of teeth, stumble away, slipping on the ice. He lost his footing, felt the earth giving way under him, and he fell, cartwheeling back down the far side of the cliff-edge, down towards the gulch-bed.

Before he reached the bottom, he saw the sky go dark. The wolf had leapt, following him, legs extended, yellow eyes flared open.

Then he hit the stone, hard, and the pain began in earnest.

Two levels down, back into pressurised zones, and the first ambush came. There was no surprise to it – every Wolf Guard had fought in hulks before and knew the pattern of xenos attacks – but the speed of it could still astonish.

They had edged down a sloping corridor, thick with rust and the stain of ancient engine oils. The walls pressed in close, pushing against their pauldrons and helms, restricting movement and limiting them to advancing two abreast. Gunnlaugur and Slay took the vanguard, going as fast as their heavy armour would let them, followed by the others.

The first xenos burst out from a loose panel in the roof, crashing and scrabbling at the head of a swarm. They were xenotype genestealer: milk-white in the glare of the lumens, six-limbed, thickly carapaced, red-eyed, a flail of hook-claws and tentacles and teeth, all whirring and scything in a smear of speed.

Gunnlaugur ripped his thunder hammer around, crushing the lead xenos against the far wall. *Skulbrotsjór's* disruptor charge flared and the creature's skull exploded, showering them both in cranial matter.

Slay surged into the swarm, lightning claws slicing. Three xenos were torn apart, their chitinous hides hacked into shards, but more boiled down from the breach, dropping into the cramped corridor in a wave of writhing limbs. They clambered over one another, clogging every scrap of free space, seething like a single entity built of jaws and tongues and talons.

Another panel blew, this time behind them. Variiek swivelled to meet the threat, opening up with his storm bolter. Arfól piled in with his storm-shield, crushing two against the nearside wall before punching into the rest with a juddering chainblade.

Fjurn gave a pre-arranged signal, and both Gunnlaugur and Slay immediately

slammed back against opposite walls of the corridor, opening up a narrow space between them. Fjurn's assault cannon roared out in a concentrated burst, barrels cycling in a hammering whirr, gouging through the swarm ahead of them and drenching every exposed surface in streaks of thrown alien ichor. As the echoes died away, Gunnlaugur and Slay charged into the remains, piling in with the killing edges of their crackling energy weapons. The corridor swayed and flashed with light as the helm-lumens shifted, illuminating snarls and alien screams in broken freeze-frame.

The genestealers fell away at last, leaving piles of broken bodies on the corridor floor, skittering down the length of the tunnel. Slay started out after them, feeding power to his spitting claws, palpably consumed by kill-urge. Fjurn lowered his assault cannon arm and followed suit, stamping through the knee-high piles of twisted carapaces.

Gunnlaugur kicked his way after them, feeling suddenly wary. The corridor plunged onwards, angled down, heading towards a deep shaft beyond. His armour sensors picked up movement, dozens of signals, mustering for a fresh assault.

He halted. The pack stopped moving, and Slay turned his red-eyed helm towards him. 'What is it?' he asked.

The memory came again – the starlit wood, the blackmane on the high ground, the spoor trailing down, hunt-sense warning him.

The xenos, the wolf. Both prey, both with the same mind.

'They are leading us,' Gunnlaugur said, striding over to the corridor wall. The panels were pressed metal, weakened from age but still thick enough to mask augur-sweeps. He pulled his hammer back and swung, smashing the nearest one open. It came loose from its fixings and fell away, revealing a void beyond. He shoved the hanging remnant aside and pushed into the gap.

A chamber opened up before him, underlit red from still-active power-coils, hung with chains from old lifter-stations. Rows of xenos eyes glared back at him in the dark, crouched amid ancient machine-clusters, the closest less than five metres away.

It was there too, further in, the guiding intelligence, now sensed clearly. It had kept its creatures back, baiting the corridors with lesser warriors, goading the Wolves to advance. Once down in the shaft, this swarm would have piled in after them, dropping over the shaft's lip like rats, smothering them with numbers.

Gunnlaugur hefted his hammer two-handed as his pack-mates clambered into the chamber after him. The xenos were already leaping at him, furious, hissing,

their hellish eyes caught in the moving glare of the helm-lumens.

He fed more power to *skulbrotsjór*, enjoying the sharp feedback of the leaping energy arcs. He took a single stride, building up power in the swing, then smashed the heavy head into the first of them.

The wolf was all over him, snapping at his throat, ripping at his chest with its claws. He could barely see – blood was in his eyes and across his face. Something had sliced through the muscles of his lower back. The blackmane had him pinned, locked down against the ice of the frozen gulch.

Somehow he managed to slash across its face with his axe – another wild swipe, born of desperation. The blade snagged across the wolf's jaws, tearing flesh from the gums, and the blackmane reared up, yowling, its own blood now mixing with his.

He managed to pull away, scrambling on his back, kicking out with his legs and wriggling clear of the wolf's breathy embrace. It reeked, its aroma making him want to vomit, but he kept going, sliding underfoot, doing anything just to keep moving.

The wolf came back at him, pouncing at his midriff, aiming to bite his stomach out and shake the entrails loose. He hacked again with the axe and it connected, forcing the creature back.

He dragged himself to his feet, shaky now, bleeding, his head swimming. The wolf, holding back, paced around him, head held low, jowls dripping. It was huge, *massive*, a brooding black ghost of the deep woods, golden-eyed, yellow-fanged, bloody-mawed. He could see its muscles bunching again, tensing for the pounce. He could see the wounds he'd given it.

He clutched his axe one-handed with a fear-slick palm. As he moved the blade, he saw its eyes following the iron edge. It knew the axe brought it pain, and never let it out of its gaze.

He could use that. He knew its mind – it feared the iron. It would be wary of it, seeing that as the one claw he possessed that could hurt it. With his other hand, he reached down to his belt, fingers searching.

The wolf leapt again, barrelling into him like a cracking thunder-surge, growling and snapping, in a frenzy now from the blood in the air. He had known what it would do – it tried to take his axe-hand off at the wrist, to swallow it down and de-fang him. If he were quick enough, he might have been able to snatch the hand away, spinning round to try another strike at its neck.

But he didn't. He kept his hand in place, and felt the clamp of steel-trap jaws

over his wrist.

He roared out loud from the pain, feeling the wolf's teeth chew down into his bone, mauling and tearing the flesh from it. His vision shuddered. He was only barely able to bring his other hand to bear – the one that had reached for the dirk at his belt – and which he now buried in the wolf's flank, twisting the iron in hard.

The wolf spasmed in agony, its jaws still latched on to his right hand, its eyes rolling, its mouth foaming. He pressed the dirk in deeper, carving through muscle towards the heart. He kept on crying out, screaming his pain into the night, clinging to consciousness even as the wolf ripped his hand from his wrist in a sick snap of bone.

He never saw the blood fountaining from the wound, as rich and hot as pitch. His mind was now locked on his left hand, ripping along the wolf's belly like a butcher's flensing knife. The blackmane tried to go for his throat, but its massive legs gave out under it, knocking them both to the ice again.

He was drenched in blood now, his own and the beast's, and it steamed against the red snow. His legs were heavy. Its lupine head lolled against his, jamming him against the cold-seared ground. He could barely breathe, for the creature's ribcage crushed him. He felt the heat of life squeezed out of him, pouring from the wound, hollowing him out.

He tried to stay conscious. He clung to his soul with his one good hand, grabbing it as it fled the halls of his body, jamming it back within the cage of bone.

He was delirious. Blood loss was making him crazy. He saw masked figures around him, gazing down at him – gods of the hunt, angry with his failure.

'I killed it!' he protested, as the wolf's lifeless corpse crushed him into the earth.

But that was pointless – there was no pleading with them. The only thing he could still do was drive the dirk in deeper, parting the hot flesh of the predator, making sure of the kill even as his own life slipped away from him.

He tried to keep his eyes open. The trees stood over him, silent sentinels, bars of black against the sea of stars beyond.

He kept fighting, right until the end. Then the dirk fell from his grasp, its blade skittered across the stained ice, and the night took him.

The Terminators charged, lumbering up the centre of the chamber. The floor cracked under their tread as they came, and the xenos leapt out at them, talons

extended and long tongues writhing. They pounced down from the heights and surged up from the pits, pouring out of hidden vaults in the everlasting dark. The only light was the angry glow of half-dead power coils, the flash and spin of moving helm-lumens, the neon flare of disruptor fields biting.

Slay and Fjurn went right, Arfól and Variiek left, driving the xenos back into the shadows. The warrior pairs worked in tandem – ranged fire and close-combat, locked together, studies in destruction. The genestealers howled and shrieked, darting and sweeping, trying to get their armour-shredding talons close enough, but they were blasted apart by the heavy rain of bolter shells. Any that got within blade range were torn open by lightning claw or power sword, their carapaces cracked and the mucus within flung across the chamber.

Gunnlaugur had no part of those fights. His brothers drove into the mass of the enemy, slaughtering with brutal efficiency, keeping the swarm at bay. He strode down the centre up to where it waited, thunder hammer snarling.

He had sensed it for hours, its presence growing firmer in his mind with every stride. Now it stood before him, its huge outline flickering in the broken light. It was as pale as the others, six-limbed like they were, with the pronounced cranial ridge and arched, bone-vened back. It crouched, its armoured hide glistening, its ovipositer lashing like a whip.

It was the master. It was the killer. It was, as the Imperium had come to categorise its kind, the *broodlord*.

Gunnlaugur lowered his thunder hammer and made the ritual challenge. The death-words of Fenris echoed out from his vox-amplifier, drowning the xenos-screams for a moment. He felt his hearts pump hard, the hyperadrenaline surge, the kill-urge spike, the primordial love of the hunt bursting into the flood.

The broodlord moved with blinding speed, powering into the air, arms splayed. Gunnlaugur got his thunder hammer into guard, slamming it into the creature's path. The hammer head collided with a *crack*, shattering a length of chitin, but the broodlord scythed round with another limb, slicing deep into his left arm-guard.

Gunnlaugur reeled, swinging the hammer back to knock the broodlord's talon away even as another one came in. Its claws were everywhere, punching out, curling back, lashing across. Gunnlaugur fought back hard, driving for every scrap of speed, pushing his armour to its limit. He wielded the hammer one-handed, smashing its crackling head into the broodlord's bleeding back even as the creature savaged his own defences.

They locked together, tearing, snarling, cracking. Gunnlaugur's right pauldron

was smashed, exposing the cabling beneath. His breastplate was cracked, his vox-grille dented. The talons burst through into his flesh, scoring his ribcage, slashing down across his gauntlets.

He couldn't land the killing blow. The broodlord darted away from the arcing thunder hammer, evading the lethal disruptor-bite before leaping up again to slash at him with blood-flecked claws. Gunnlaugur caught glimpses of its face – grotesque, semi-human, distorted with a grinning sadism, a corpse-mask nightmare from the recesses of species memory.

Gunnlaugur hacked crosswise, wheeling the hammer-head hard, going for the broodlord's throat. The xenos veered clear, then pushed in close, gouging at him with three arms at once, aiming to overwhelm him with more strikes than he could counter. Gunnlaugur parried one with his hammer-arm, twisting away from another, but the third penetrated, mauling deep under his breastplate and cutting into the flesh.

Gunnlaugur fell back, already bleeding from a dozen wounds, racked by pain. The creature came after him, panting and slurring. The echo and slam of bolter fire rang around the chamber, punctuated by the rush of flames and the snarl of energy weapons.

The memory came back to him again then, as vivid as the dreams of gothi. He saw the wolf arched over his body, snapping at his throat. He felt the rip as his hand was torn, and the breath of the predator in his face.

The broodlord would go for the thunder hammer.

Just as before, the beast would rip the weapon from his fist, tearing away the thing that brought it pain before turning on the owner. Gunnlaugur saw the intent a fraction before it moved, placing his mind within that of the alien. He instantly dropped down to his left, straining every servo to move fast enough, dragging the sacred energy-weapon out of its path and away from strike-range.

The broodlord pounced for it, already committed. Gunnlaugur thrust back up, his thunder hammer out of contention but his left fist in range. The curled gauntlet cracked into the creature's skull, and he heard the snap of breaking chitin. He punched again, then again, pummeling the creature in a flurry of whip-fast movements.

It reeled, losing its footing, and he stamped down on its trailing leg, cracking the carapace and crippling it. It swung at him with a trailing arm, breaking the armour under his knee-joint, but now Gunnlaugur towered over it, bringing the thunder hammer back into play.

Once he had sacrificed his weapon for the kill, but never again.

Grabbing the shaft two-handed, he hoisted *skulbrotsjór* above his head, built momentum, then smashed it down. It connected with the broodlord's neck, driving its bloated skull into the floor and pushing on through, annihilating the metal underfoot with a blaze of energy-field discharge. The broodlord's body twitched madly for a moment, limbs shaking like a giant insect, before it collapsed into inertia.

Gunnlaugur threw the hammer down again, pulverising the foul flesh beneath, spraying ichor across his devastated armour shell. Then he whirled around, roaring in triumph, holding the blazing thunder hammer above his cracked helm.

'*Fenrys!*' he bellowed, and the amplifiers in his armour made the chamber shake.

Before him, the wolf pack was in full murder-make, grappling with xenos, their fists bloody and their weapons singing. Variiek was down, the genestealers crawling all over him, trying to prise his battleplate open. The others were hard pressed, matching the blind rage of the alien with concentrated fury of their own.

It was a brutal, glorious sight, the scions of Fenris locked in mortal slaughter with the Hel-spawn of the boundless stars. Gunnlaugur's rage was tempered with the hot edge of joy then, for he had been made to fight these fights – his every sinew forged to purge the unclean from the realm of humanity, to break them on the anvil of his wrath, to hunt them in the primordial way of his savage home world.

So he strode back into contact, *skulbrotsjór* snarling and sizzling, poised to plunge back into the path of killing, lost in the righteous rage, his hearts thudding with the drum-beat of violence.

The hunt went on. So it had always been. So it would ever be.

When he next woke, there were no trees, no stars, no wolf. Pain throbbed throughout his body, worse than the clamp of jaws. He tried to lift his head, but it was held rigid by an iron collar.

Terror rose up within him, pure and throttling. He saw thin lines, translucent like animal skin, threaded into his arms. The air around him tasted foul – no smell of animal, no smell of earth, just metal everywhere. He tried to move, and the threads in his arms yanked painfully at his flesh. He was on his back, pinned, groggy.

He couldn't see clearly. Everything was blurred, a mess of shadows and light-patches. Something huge swam into his visual field. For a moment, in a brief flash of clarity, it looked like a massive skull with glowing red eyes.

He wanted to scream, but the tube running down his throat prevented him. The skull stared down at him impassively, studying him like a man studying a weapon.

Then the skull loomed lower, and an iron fist pulled the tube from his throat, making him gag but allowing him to speak. Another iron fist floated over him, clutching at a slender-bladed axe with teeth-marks on the shaft.

‘What is this called?’ came a voice, grinding like glacier-ice, as deep as mountain-roots.

He had to answer; he had no choice, even though his throat was red-raw and the terror had not gone away.

‘*Skulbrotsjór*,’ he rasped, and his voice sounded pathetic, a ghost’s whine next to the god’s voice that still echoed in his mind.

The skull-mask nodded.

‘Keep the name,’ it told him. ‘We will give you a weapon worthy of it.’

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chris Wraight is the author of the Horus Heresy novel *Scars*, the novella *Brotherhood of the Storm* and the audio drama *The Sigillite*. For Warhammer 40,000 he has written the Space Wolves novels *Blood of Asaheim* and *Stormcaller*, and the short story collection *Wolves of Fenris*, as well as the Space Marine Battles novels *Wrath of Iron* and *Battle of the Fang*. Additionally, he has many Warhammer novels to his name, including the Time of Legends novel *Master of Dragons*, which forms part of the War of Vengeance series. Chris lives and works near Bristol, in south-west England.

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