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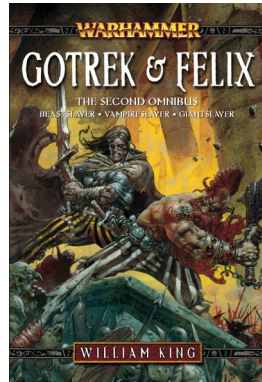
GOTREK & FELIX: THE SECOND OMNIBUS

Containing the stories
DRAGONSLAYER, BEASTSLAYER and
VAMPIRESLAYER

By William King

After fleeing the Imperial authorities in the city of Altdorf, poet Felix Jaeger finds he has sworn a drunken oath to dour dwarf Gotrek Gurnisson to witness his death and write an epic poem. In the cold light of day, Felix learns that Gotrek is a Slayer – a dwarf doomed to seek an honourable death in battle to atone for a personal disgrace. With the dwarf seeking out the biggest and fiercest monsters at every opportunity, Felix must simply survive to tell the tale!

Collecting the fourth, fifth and sixth action-packed novels in the series, Gotrek & Felix: The Second Omnibus is packed with storming fantasy adventure.



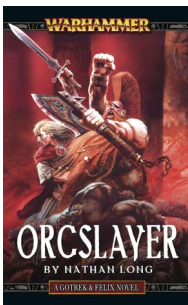
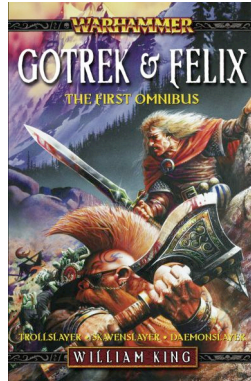
About the Author

William King was born in Stranraer, Scotland, in 1959. His short stories have appeared in *The Year's Best SF*, *Zenith*, *White Dwarf* and *Interzone*. He is the author of the much-loved Gotrek & Felix adventures and the Space Wolf novels. He currently lives in Prague.

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**GOTREK & FELIX: THE SECOND
OMNIBUS**
(Contains books 4-6 in the series:
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Book 7 – GIANTSLAYER by William King

Book 8 – ORCSLAYER by Nathan Long

Book 9 – MANSLAYER by Nathan Long

Book 10 – ELFLAYER by Nathan Long

The following is an excerpt from *Gotrek & Felix: The Second Omnibus* by William King.

Published by the Black Library. Games Workshop, Willow Road, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, UK.

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FELIX JAEGER LOOKED down from the bridge of the *Spirit of Grungni*. He was a tall man, blond of hair, broad of shoulder, narrow of hip. His face was tanned and worry lines radiated out from his eyes that really should not have been etched on the face of one so young. But then, as Felix would have been the first to admit, he was a man who in his time had endured more than his share of worries.

His hands were braced on the great wheel of the airship as he made a course correction, steering the mighty vessel directly towards where he believed the pass out of the Chaos Wastes should lie. His hand still hurt from the burns he had taken wielding the Hammer of Firebeard. He was grateful to be able to grasp anything at all. He had been lucky. The dwarf healing salve had helped a good deal.

His keen eyes scanned the tormented land below him, watching the arid semi-desert scroll along beneath the *Spirit of Grungni*. In the distance, he thought he could make out a rising dust cloud.

He shivered. Whatever was making it, it was not friendly. Nothing here was.

He looked at the compass but he knew it was not always reliable in the Wastes. Several times he had seen the lodestone needle rotate around in a circle under the influence of evil magic. Fortunately they were now nearing the edge of the cursed land, where the oddly-coloured storm clouds did not always obscure the sky, and the stars were often visible by night and sometimes in the dim light of day. These gave him something to navigate by. Several times they had drifted far off course until they had found a star to navigate by, which had added days to their travel time.

Felix exhaled loudly. He was bone weary. He was no longer glad now that Malakai Makaiisson had taught him how to fly the vessel – although it

gave him something to do, and kept his mind from worrying about things he could not control.

The nose came round sluggishly, which was not surprising. The *Spirit of Grungni* was loaded to capacity and then some. The survivors of the dwarf community of Karag Dum, those who had been left alive after the last fatal confrontation with the daemonic bloodthirster and its minions, filled every cabin and spare cranny on the airship. The hold bulged with the treasures they had taken from the lost citadel. Felix wondered how Hargrim and his people would take to their new life beyond the Wastes.

The drone of the engines was loud as they struggled to drive the ship into the wind. Felix cursed, for it seemed that the very elements conspired against them on their journey out of the Wastes. He half-suspected evil magic. There were dozens of mages sworn to serve the Dark Powers down there, and it was easy to imagine one of them whistling up a wind to slow the airship down, or a storm to drive it into the ground. The *Spirit of Grungni* was protected against the direct effects of magic but there was really nothing anyone except another magician could do against such indirect methods.

Felix strove to push such thoughts aside, to think of happier things. He wondered what Ulrika was doing just now, whether she missed him, or even thought about him at all. Perhaps she had forgotten all about him. Perhaps he had just been a brief fling for her. Any such thoughts were driven from his head by the sound of loud cursing from behind him.

Gotrek Gurnisson entered the bridge of the airship and made his presence felt in no uncertain terms. He stomped around the command deck, glaring at the apprentice engineers, and casting irate glances through the crystal windows as if half-expecting to see an enemy flying towards them. Considering that a mere few days ago Gotrek had been near death from the wounds he had taken in his battle with the Bloodthirster of Khorne, the dwarf had made a remarkable recovery. He still did not look well. His massive chest was swathed in bandages. His huge red dyed crest of hair poked out of a turban of similar bandages wrapped around his head. The same cloth obscured the eyepatch that normally covered his empty left socket. One of his arms was bound in a sling but he still managed to carry his massive axe in his right hand. Considering Felix would struggle to lift the weapon with both hands, it was an impressive feat.

Actually, the fact that the Slayer was up and about at all was a testimony to the ruggedness of the dwarf physique. Felix knew that if he, or any other man, had suffered the wounds Gotrek had, he would have been bedridden for months, if he could have survived at all.

‘Feeling better?’ Felix asked. Gotrek’s cursing had already given him an answer to that question.

‘I feel as if I have been trampled on by a herd of donkeys, manling.’

‘An improvement then?’

‘Yes. Yesterday I felt like I had lost a head-butting contest with Snorri Nosebiter.’

‘Well, you’re lucky to be alive at all. That’s what Borek says.’

‘What’s lucky about it, manling? If I had fallen in combat with that accursed daemon I would have atoned for my misdeeds, and you would be composing my death saga. As it is, I have to listen to Snorri Nosebiter snoring and boasting about how many beastmen he slew. Believe me, there are some fates that are worse than death.’

Felix raised an eyebrow. He knew the dwarf well enough now to understand when he was making a joke. Oddly enough, given the fact that his avowed purpose in life was to find a heroic death in battle, Gotrek did not sound all that sorry to still be alive. Felix suspected that he actually detected a note of sour pleasure in the Slayer’s voice, though he thought it diplomatic not to point this out. Instead he said, ‘But if you had fallen, none of the folk of Karag Dum would have escaped, the Hammer of Firebeard would have fallen into the hands of the Chaos worshippers, and the Great Bloodthirster would have had his revenge on the race of dwarfs. Surely that is something to be thankful for?’

‘You might have a point there, manling.’

‘You know I do. And we did help Borek prove his theory about the location of Karag Dum. We did find the lost city, and we did recover the sacred hammer.’

‘There’s no need to belabour the point.’

‘And we did thwart the powers of darkness, and get a fair haul of gold and—’

‘I said—’

‘Felix Jaeger does have a point, Gotrek, son of Gurni,’ said a deep mellow voice. Felix glanced back to see that the ancient dwarf scholar, Borek, had also entered the bridge. He was stooped almost double with age and he had to use a stick to help him walk but there was a vitality about him, and an excitement, that Felix had never seen before. He was filled with life and triumph. Their success at Karag Dum, if you could call taking part in a battle that had left most of the dwarf population of the city dead a success, had given meaning to his entire life. They had recovered Firebeard’s hammer and would restore it to the dwarf people. Felix knew that Borek thought they had performed a mighty feat of valour. He himself

was not so sure. Beside the scholar was his nephew, Varek, who had accompanied Felix and Gotrek and Snorri into the lost city, and had recorded their deeds. Varek's glasses glittered in the light filtering onto the command deck. He smiled at Felix and the Slayer cheerily.

As well he might, thought Felix. Not many dwarfs could claim to have survived an encounter with a daemon of Chaos.

Just behind them stood Hargrim, the son of Thangrim Firebeard, his beard dyed as black as his clothing as he mourned his father. Now his father was gone, he was the leader of the folk of Karag Dum. His face was as grim as death. His eyes were sad as only those of a dwarf who had lost father and home at the same time could be.

He noticed the look Borek gave him. It was not really a look suited to an ancient whose white beard dragged along the floor. It held an element of reverence that made Felix uncomfortable. Since his return from Karag Dum most of the dwarfs on the airship had been giving him that look. He had lifted Firebeard's hammer and invoked its power in the battle with the great daemon. Apparently he was the first and only human in history since the time of the man-god Sigmar to have performed such a feat, and they now regarded him as blessed by their gods. Felix did not feel particularly blessed. Just invoking the hammer's power had almost killed him. And fighting the daemon was a feat he hoped never to have to repeat in his life.

'Look down there!' said Felix to distract them. His keen eyes had caught sight of movement in the Wastes from the edge of the vast dust cloud. By all the gods, it was huge. If it were being made by a force of men, Felix would have suspected the presence of an army. Here in the Chaos Wastes, who knew what it signified?

As they closed with it, he could see a group of figures, made tiny by the airship's altitude, riding across the land, a massive cloud of polychromatic dust rising in their wake.

Borek peered down through his pince-nez glasses. 'What is it? Tell me! My eyes are not so good.'

'It's a trail of dust,' Gotrek said. 'There are riders down there. A lot of them.'

'I would say several hundred. Black-armoured Chaos knights. Heading south, the same direction we are.'

'Your eyes are better than mine, manling. I'll take your word for it.'

'That's the tenth party we have seen since we left Karag Dum. All heading in the same direction.' Slowly something became evident to Felix. He felt his heartbeat start to pound, and his mouth go dry. They were passing over the heart of the dust cloud now, and he could see many more

figures. Thousands of them, perhaps tens of thousands. He thought he could make out the misshapen figures of beastmen, and other more disturbing things. It was apparent that the Chaos worshippers they had seen earlier were either stragglers from, or the rearguard of, a much mightier force. One that was heading directly into the lands of men.

‘By Grungni, it’s an army on the march,’ he heard Varek say. The young dwarf had a spyglass pressed to his face and was looking through it intently. ‘This is larger than the force that besieged Karag Dum. What is going on?’

‘I fear the Powers of Chaos are planning a new incursion into the lands of men,’ Hargrim said. ‘No place will be safe for my people.’

Felix felt a thrill of fear. The last thing anybody in the human lands wanted was a full-scale invasion by the followers of the Ruinous Powers. They were numberless and powerful, and Felix suspected, after what he had seen in these Wastes, that only their constant internecine fighting kept them from sweeping away human civilisation.

‘Good. I could use a decent fight,’ Gotrek said.

‘I would have thought you’d had enough of that recently,’ Felix said sourly.

‘There’s never enough fighting for a Slayer, Felix Jaeger,’ said Borek. ‘You should know that by now.’

‘Unfortunately I do.’ A new worry entered Felix’s mind, one he knew he had been trying to keep out all day. ‘If they invade, the Chaos hordes will come through the Axebite Pass.’

‘What of it, manling?’

‘Ivan Straghov’s mansion is right in their path.’

‘Then we had best hurry on and warn them, hadn’t we?’

EXCITEMENT AND TENSION filled Felix’s mind. They were through the pass. The land of Kislev lay before them. In hours he would see Ulrika again. He felt more nervous than he cared to admit. As nervous as he had ever been before a battle, perhaps more so. He wondered if she would be as pleased to see him as he was going to be to see her. He wondered what she would say, what he would say, what she would be wearing. He shook his head. He knew he was behaving like a schoolboy with a crush, yet he could not help himself. It had been a long time since he had felt this way about anyone. Not since the death of Kirsten at Fort von Diehl, which seemed like years ago. It was a pity that he had to be bringing such bad tidings.

He placed the spyglass to his eye and scanned the horizon, hoping for a first glimpse of the mansion, and was rewarded with a view of what he thought was the mooring tower. Soon, he thought, soon.

‘Looking forward to being back?’ said a voice from beside him. Felix looked down at Varek. The young dwarf was looking at him with something uncomfortably like hero worship. Felix had no idea why. Varek had shared in all the perils of the descent into Karag Dum Felix had faced and had done his part to bring their quest to a successful conclusion. There was no reason for him to idolise Felix but it was apparent that he did. Varek wore a leather helmet and flying goggles. Makaiisson had been teaching him how to fly a gyrocopter on the return trip. He had just come back from a flight, Felix realised.

‘Course young Felix is,’ said Snorri Nosebiter. ‘Even Snorri can see that. He’s going to see his lady friend.’

Snorri winked across at Felix knowingly. It was not a reassuring sight. Even bandaged as he was, Snorri Nosebiter was the only dwarf Felix had ever met who was more terrifying than Gotrek in appearance, and the wounds he had taken at Karag Dum had not improved his looks.

Like Gotrek, Snorri was a member of the Slayer cult, sworn to seek heroic death in battle. Like Gotrek his squat ape-like body was covered in tattoos. Unlike Gotrek, however, he had three nails driven directly into his shaven head. This was in place of the crest of hair that most Slayers had. Snorri was not the brightest of dwarfs but, for a Slayer, he was friendly.

Felix focussed the spyglass on the approaching manor house. There was something odd about it. At first he could not work out what, but slowly he started to put his finger on it. There were not enough people in the fields around it. In fact there was no one. There should have been serfs, carts, workhorses, soldiers, sentries, riders coming and going with messages. He ran his gaze across the horizon to make sure he was right. His heart was beating faster. His palms felt suddenly sweaty. There was a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach. This was wrong. Had the forces of Chaos already been here?

He breathed a prayer to Sigmar that nothing had happened to Ulrika, and then added one for her father and the rest of the people on the estate, but he was not sure his prayer was going to be answered. Looking closely at the mansion he could see signs of a disaster.

It looked as if the gate had been forced with a battering ram. There were signs of burning on the stone walls. Whole sections of the palisade had collapsed. It all reminded him sickeningly of the aftermath of the massacre at Fort von Diehl.

‘No, not again,’ he muttered.

‘What is it, manling? What do you see?’ Gotrek asked.

Felix did not answer. The only thing that gave him hope was the fact that he could not see any bodies. And he was not at all sure that it was a hopeful sign. There were no signs of life at all. No signs of a battle except the damage to the buildings and fortifications. Surely, he thought, there would be corpses, or at least signs of burial. Frantically he scanned the area for a funeral pyre or a mass grave. Perhaps that mound over there was new.

‘What do you see, manling?’ Gotrek asked again. There was a note of menace in his voice now.

‘The mansion has been attacked,’ he said. He was not sure how he managed to keep his voice steady but he did. ‘And it looks like everyone has simply vanished.’

‘Into thin air?’

‘It looks like it.’

‘I don’t like it,’ Gotrek said. ‘It smells of a trap.’

Felix was forced to agree with the Slayer’s assessment. There was a wrongness about the situation down there that he did not like in the least. On the other hand, he desperately needed to find out what had happened to Ulrika. Let her be alive, he prayed.

The airship moved ever closer to the deserted-looking mansion.

GREY SEER THANQUOL gazed at the approaching airship through the eyepiece of his periscope. As always, he was more impressed than he cared to admit by the dwarfs’ creation. That such a massive vessel could fly hinted at a magic greater than his own. Yet he knew it was not magic that kept the huge vessel aloft, but the dwarfs’ arcane technology.

He began to chew on some carefully hoarded pieces of powdered warpstone, knowing soon he would need all the sorcerous strength it could grant him. He felt a little weak. Last night his magical duel with the human wizard had taken nearly all his strength. It had almost upset all of his carefully laid plans. Who would have expected the humans to have such a strong mage in their midst? Still, in the end, Thanquol had triumphed, as was only inevitable. The power of a true servant of the Horned Rat would always overcome the feeble magic of mankind, just as the righteous skaven warriors had finally succeeded in taking the human keep. It filled Thanquol’s heart with pride to think they had managed it even though they had only outnumbered the humans ten to one. It was a fitting tribute to the genius of his leadership that victory was his in the teeth of such odds.

They had even taken some prisoners, who would doubtless serve as suitable subjects for Clan Moulder's experiments once this expedition was over. It pained Thanquol to think that they had not had enough time yet to really interrogate their captives. There was nothing he found more relaxing than breaking a few terrified humans to his will. In particular he was pleased to have the human wizard in his clutches. The man had been knocked unconscious by magical backlash when attempting to dispel Thanquol's last spell. Once he was conscious and Thanquol had the time, he would torture the man for the secret of his spells.

They had even managed to capture a few breeders, which was an unexpected bonus. The survivors were imprisoned in the cellars except for the youngest and, Thanquol guessed, the most attractive of the breeders whom he thought he might be able to use to lure Felix Jaeger and Gotrek Gurnisson into a trap.

Even the timing of the airship's arrival seemed to favour him. It was getting dark and that would help cover the ambushing troops waiting in the building and the cellars to erupt on the dwarfs. It occurred to Thanquol as he viewed the oncoming airship that Lurk could still be alive, and perhaps he might be able to contact him. That being the case, Thanquol thought, it was worth the attempt. It might prove very useful to have an agent alive and about Thanquol's business up there.

He decided he'd better make the attempt.

Gotrek & Felix: The Second Omnibus can be purchased in all better bookstores, Games Workshop and other hobby stores, or direct from this website and GW mail order.

Price: £8.99 (UK) / \$10.99 (US) / \$15 (CAN)

ISBN: 978 1 84416 417 2

Bookshops: Distributed in the UK and the US by Simon & Schuster Books.

Games & hobby stores: Distributed in UK and US by Games Workshop.

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