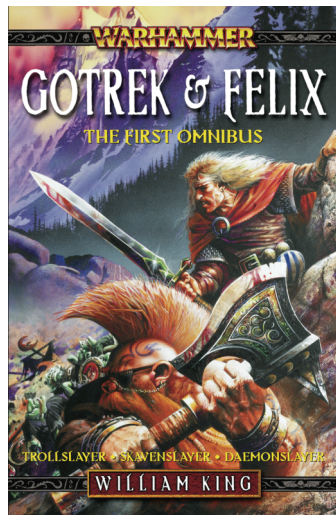


# ***GOTREK AND FELIX: The First Omnibus***

*By William King*

In the annals of the Old World, there is no tale greater than the death saga of Gotrek Gurnisson. Seeking retribution for a past sin by dying a glorious death in battle, the mad dwarf journeys through the Old World seeking a foe worthy enough to best him in combat. Dragged along on this epic journey is ex-noble warrior-poet Felix Jaeger, exiled from his human kin and struggling to survive in this grim and untamed world.



Together, Gotrek and Felix face more and more dangerous foes in Gotrek's quest for the ultimate opponent. On the way, they must thwart sinister plots, defend the weak and face the very daemons of Chaos itself.

### **About the Author**

William King's short stories have appeared The Year's Best SF, Zenith, Interzone and White Dwarf. He has written seven Gotrek & Felix novels and the Space Wolf novels, starring Ragnar Blackmane. He lives in Scotland.

**•GOTREK AND FELIX•**

GOTREK AND FELIX: THE FIRST OMNIBUS  
(Contains the novels TROLLSLAYER, SKAVENSLAYER and  
DAEMONSLAYER)  
William King

GOTREK AND FELIX: THE SECOND OMNIBUS  
(Contains the novels DRAGONSLAYER, BEASTSLAYER and  
VAMPIRESLAYER)  
William King

GOTREK AND FELIX: THE THIRD OMNIBUS  
(Contains the novels GIANTSLAYER, ORCSLAYER and  
MANSAYER)

ELFSLAYER  
Nathan Long

**•ALSO•**

BATTLE FOR SKULL PASS  
Nathan Long

The following is an excerpt from *Gotrek and Felix: The First Omnibus* by William King

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

Copyright © Games Workshop Ltd, 2006. All rights reserved. Reproduction prohibited, in any form, including on the internet.

For more details email [publishing@games-workshop.co.uk](mailto:publishing@games-workshop.co.uk) or visit the Black Library website [www.blacklibrary.com](http://www.blacklibrary.com)

Damn all manling coach drivers and all manling women,’ Gotrek Gurnisson muttered, adding a curse in dwarfish.

‘You did have to insult the lady Isolde, didn’t you?’

Felix Jaeger said peevishly. ‘As things are, we’re lucky they didn’t just shoot us. If you can call it “lucky” to be dumped in the Reikwald on Geheimnismacht Eve.’

‘We paid for our passage. We were just as entitled to sit inside as her. The drivers were unmanly cowards,’

Gotrek grumbled. ‘They refused to meet me hand to hand. I would not have minded being spitted on steel, but being blasted with buckshot is no death for a Trollslayer.’

Felix shook his head. He could see that one of his companion’s black moods was coming on. There would be no arguing with him and Felix had plenty of other things to worry about. The sun was setting, giving the mist-covered forest a ruddy hue.

Long shadows danced eerily and brought to mind too many frightening tales of the horrors to be found under the canopy of trees.

He wiped his nose with the edge of his cloak, then pulled the Sudenland wool tight about him. He sniffed and looked at the sky where Morrslieb and Mannslieb, the lesser and greater moons, were already visible. Morrslieb

seemed to be giving off a faint greenish glow. It wasn't a good sign.

'I think I have a fever coming on,' Felix said. The Trollslayer looked up at him and chuckled contemptuously. In the last rays of the dying sun, his nose-chain was a bloody arc running from nostril to earlobe.

'Yours is a weak race,' Gotrek said. 'The only fever I feel this eve is the battle-fever. It sings in my head.' He turned and glared out into the darkness of the woods. 'Come out, little beastmen!' he bellowed. 'I have a gift for you.'

He laughed loudly and ran his thumb along the edge of the blade of his great two-handed axe. Felix saw that it drew blood. Gotrek began to suck his thumb.

'Sigmar preserve us, be quiet!' Felix hissed. 'Who knows what lurks out there on a night like this?'

Gotrek glared at him. Felix could see the glint of insane violence appear in his eyes. Instinctively Felix's hand strayed nearer to the pommel of his sword.

'Give me no orders, manling! I am of the Elder Race and am beholden only to the Kings Under the Mountain, exile though I be.'

Felix bowed formally. He was well schooled in the use of the sword. The scars on his face showed that he had fought several duels in his student days. He had once killed a man and so ended a promising academic career. But still he did not relish the thought of fighting the Trollslayer. The tip of Gotrek's crested hair came only to the level of Felix's chest, but the dwarf outweighed him and his bulk was all muscle. And Felix had seen Gotrek use that axe.

The dwarf took the bow as an apology and turned once more to the darkness. ‘Come out!’ he shouted. ‘I care not if all the powers of evil walk the woods this night. I will face any challenger.’

The dwarf was working himself up to a pitch of fury. During the time of their acquaintance Felix had noticed that the Trollslayer’s long periods of brooding were often followed by brief explosions of rage. It was one of the things about his companion that fascinated Felix. He knew that Gotrek had become a Trollslayer to atone for some crime. He was sworn to seek death in unequal combat with fearsome monsters. He seemed bitter to the point of madness – yet he kept to his oath.

Perhaps, thought Felix, I too would go mad if I had been driven into exile among strangers not even of my own race. He felt some sympathy for the crazed dwarf. Felix knew what it was like to be driven from home under a cloud. The duel with Wolfgang Krassner had caused quite a scandal.

At that moment, however, the dwarf seemed bent on getting them both killed, and he wanted no part of it. Felix continued to plod along the road, casting an occasional worried glance at the bright full moons.

Behind him the ranting continued.

‘Are there no warriors among you? Come feel my axe. She thirsts!’

Only a madman would so tempt fate and the dark powers on Geheimnisnacht, Night of Mystery, in the darkest reaches of the forest, Felix decided.

He could make out chanting in the flinty, guttural tongue of the Mountain Dwarfs, then once more in Reikspiel, he heard: ‘Send me a champion!’

For a second there was silence. Condensation from the clammy mist ran down his brow. Then – from far, far off – the sound of galloping horses rang out in the quiet night.

What has that maniac done, Felix thought, has he offended one of the Old Powers? Have they sent their daemon riders to carry us off?

Felix stepped off the road. He shuddered as wet leaves fondled his face. They felt like dead men's fingers. The thunder of hooves came closer, moving with hellish speed along the forest road. Surely only a supernatural being could keep such breakneck pace on the winding forest road? He felt his hand shake as he unsheathed his sword.

I was foolish to follow Gotrek, he thought. Now I'll never get the poem finished. He could hear the loud neighing of horses, the cracking of a whip and mighty wheels turning.

'Good!' Gotrek roared. His voice drifted from the trail behind. 'Good!'

There was a loud bellowing and four immense jet black horses drawing an equally black coach hurtled past. Felix saw the wheels bounce as they hit a rut in the road. He could just make out a black-cloaked driver. He shrank back into the bushes.

He heard the sound of feet coming closer. The bushes were pulled aside. Before him stood Gotrek, looking madder and wilder than ever. His crest was matted, brown mud was smeared over his tattooed body and his studded leather jerkin was ripped and torn.

'The snotling-fondlers tried to run me over!' he yelled. 'Let's get after them!'

He turned and headed up the muddy road at a fast trot. Felix noted that Gotrek was singing happily in Khazalid.

Further down the Bogenhafen road the pair found the Standing Stones Inn. The windows were shuttered and no lights showed. They could hear a neighing from the stables but when they checked there was no coach, black or otherwise, only some skittish ponies and a peddler's cart.

'We've lost the coach. Might as well get a bed for the night,' Felix suggested. He looked warily at the smaller moon, Morrslieb. The sickly green glow was stronger. 'I do not like being abroad under this evil light.'

'You are feeble, manling. Cowardly too.'

'They'll have ale.'

'On the other hand, some of your suggestions are not without merit. Watery though human beer is, of course.'

'Of course,' Felix said. Gotrek failed to spot the note of irony in his voice.

The inn was not fortified but the walls were thick, and when they tried the door they found it was barred.

Gotrek began to bang it with the butt of his axe-shaft.

There was no response.

'I can smell humans within,' Gotrek said. Felix wondered how he could smell anything over his own stench. Gotrek never washed and his hair was matted with animal fat to keep his red-dyed crest in place.

'They'll have locked themselves in. Nobody goes abroad on Geheimnischacht. Unless they're witches or daemon-lovers.'

'The black coach was abroad,' Gotrek said.

‘Its occupants were up to no good. The windows were curtained and the coach bore no crest of arms.’

‘My throat is too dry to discuss such details. Come on, open up in there or I’ll take my axe to the door!’

Felix thought he heard movement within. He pressed an ear to the door. He could make out the mutter of voices and what sounded like weeping.

‘Unless you want me to chop through your head, manling, I suggest you stand aside,’ Gotrek said to Felix.

‘Just a moment. I say: you inside! Open up! My friend has a very large axe and a very short temper. I suggest you do as he says or lose your door.’

‘What was that about “short”?’ Gotrek said touchily.

From behind the door came a thin, quavering cry. ‘In the name of Sigmar, begone, you daemons of the pit!’

‘Right, that’s it,’ Gotrek snapped. ‘I’ve had enough.’

He drew his axe back in a huge arc. Felix saw the runes on its blade gleam in the Morrslieb light. He leapt aside.

‘In the name of Sigmar!’ Felix shouted. ‘You cannot exorcise us. We are simple, weary travellers.’

The axe bit into the door with a chunking sound.

Splinters of wood flew from it. Gotrek turned to Felix and grinned evilly up at him. Felix noted the missing teeth.

‘Shoddily made, these manling doors,’ Gotrek said.

‘I suggest you open up while you still have a door,’ Felix called.

‘Wait,’ the quavering voice said. ‘That door cost me five crowns from Jurgen the carpenter.’

The door was unlatched. It opened. A tall, thin man with a sad face framed by lank, white hair stood there. He had a stout club in one hand. Behind him stood an old



woman who held a saucer that contained a guttering candle.

‘You will not need your weapon, sir. We require only a bed for the night,’ Felix said.

‘And ale,’ the dwarf grunted.

‘And ale,’ Felix agreed.

‘Lots of ale,’ Gotrek said. Felix looked at the old man and shrugged helplessly.

Inside, the inn had a low common room. The bar was made of planks stretched across two barrels. From the corner, three armed men who looked like travelling peddlers watched them warily. They each had daggers drawn. The shadows hid their faces but they seemed worried.

The innkeeper hustled the pair inside and slid the bars back into place. ‘Can you pay, Herr Doktor?’ he asked nervously. Felix could see the man’s Adam’s apple moving.

‘I am not a professor, I am a poet,’ he said, producing his thin pouch and counting out his few remaining gold coins. ‘But I can pay.’

‘Food,’ Gotrek said. ‘And ale.’

At this the old woman burst into tears. Felix stared at her.

‘The hag is discomfited,’ Gotrek said.

The old man nodded. ‘Our Gunter is missing, on this of all nights.’

‘Get me some ale,’ Gotrek said. The innkeeper backed off. Gotrek got up and stumped over to where the peddlers were sitting. They regarded him warily.

‘Do any of you know about a black coach drawn by four black horses?’ Gotrek asked.

‘You have seen the black coach?’ one of the peddlers asked. The fear was evident in his voice.

‘Seen it? The bloody thing nearly ran me over.’ A man gasped. Felix heard the sound of a ladle being dropped. He saw the innkeeper stoop to pick it up and begin refilling the tankard.

‘You are lucky then,’ the fattest and most prosperous-looking peddler said. ‘Some say the coach is driven by daemons. I have heard it passes here on Geheimnisnacht every year. Some say it carries wee children from Altdorf who are sacrificed at the Darkstone Ring.’ Gotrek looked at him with interest. Felix did not like the way this was developing.

‘Surely that is only a legend,’ he said.

‘No, sir,’ the innkeeper shouted. ‘Every year we hear the thunder of its passing. Two years ago Gunter looked out and saw it, a black coach just as you describe.’

At the mention of Gunter’s name the old woman began to cry again. The innkeeper brought stew and two great steins of ale.

‘Bring beer for my companion too,’ Gotrek said. The landlord went off for another stein.

‘Who is Gunter?’ Felix asked when he returned. There was another wail from the old woman.

‘More ale,’ Gotrek said. The landlord looked in astonishment at the empty flagons.

‘Take mine,’ Felix said. ‘Now, mein host, who is Gunter?’

‘And why does the old hag howl at the very mention of his name?’ Gotrek asked, wiping his mouth on his mud-encrusted arm.

‘Gunter is our son. He went out to chop wood this afternoon. He has not returned.’

‘Gunter is a good boy,’ the old woman sniffled. ‘How will we survive without him?’

‘Perhaps he is simply lost in the woods?’

‘Impossible,’ the innkeeper said. ‘Gunter knows the woods round here like I know the hairs on my hand. He should have been home hours ago. I fear the coven has taken him, as a sacrifice.’

‘It’s just like Lotte Hauptmann’s daughter, Ingrid,’ the fat peddler said. The innkeeper shot him a dirty look.

‘I want no tales told of our son’s betrothed,’ he said.

‘Let the man speak,’ Gotrek said. The peddler looked at him gratefully.

‘The same thing happened last year, in Hartzroch, just down the road. Goodwife Hauptmann looked in on her teenage daughter Ingrid just after sunset. She thought she heard banging coming from her daughter’s room. The girl was gone, snatched by who-knows-what sorcerous power from her bed in a locked house. The next day the hue and cry went up. We found Ingrid. She was covered in bruises and in a terrible state.’

He looked at them to make sure he had their attention.

‘You asked her what happened?’ Felix said.

‘Aye, sir. It seems she had been carried off by daemons, wild things of the wood, to Darkstone Ring. There the coven waited with evil creatures from the forests. They made to sacrifice her at the altar but she broke free from her captors and invoked the good name of blessed Sigmar. While they reeled she fled. They pursued her but could not overtake her.’

‘That was lucky,’ Felix said dryly.

‘There is no need to mock, Herr Doktor. We made our way to the stones and we did find all sorts of tracks in the disturbed earth. Including those of humans and beasts and cloven-hoofed daemons. And a yearling infant gutted like a pig upon the altar.’

‘Cloven-hoofed daemons?’ Gotrek asked. Felix didn’t like the look of interest in his eye. The peddler nodded. ‘I would not venture up to Darkstone Ring tonight,’ the peddler said. ‘Not for all the gold in Altdorf.’

‘It would be a task fit for a hero,’ Gotrek said, looking meaningfully at Felix. Felix was shocked.

‘Surely you cannot mean—’

‘What better task for a Trollslayer than to face these daemons on their sacred night? It would be a mighty death.’

‘It would be a stupid death,’ Felix muttered.

‘What was that?’

‘Nothing.’

‘You are coming, aren’t you?’ Gotrek said menacingly. He was rubbing his thumb along the blade of his axe. Felix noticed that it was bleeding again.

He nodded slowly. ‘An oath is an oath.’

The dwarf slapped him upon the back with such force that he thought his ribs would break. ‘Sometimes, manling, I think you must have dwarf blood in you. Not that any of the Elder race would stoop to such a mixed marriage, of course.’

He stomped back to his ale.

‘Of course,’ his companion said, glaring at his back.

Felix fumbled in his pack for his mail shirt. He noticed that the innkeeper and his wife and the peddlers were

looking at him. Their eyes held something that looked close to awe. Gotrek sat near the fire drinking ale and grumbling in dwarfish.

‘You’re not really going with him?’ the fat peddler whispered. Felix nodded.

‘Why?’

‘He saved my life. I owe him a debt.’ Felix thought it best not to mention the circumstances under which Gotrek had saved him.

‘I pulled the manling out from under the hooves of the Emperor’s cavalry,’ Gotrek shouted.

Felix cursed bitterly. The Trollslayer has the hearing of a wild beast as well as the brains of one, he thought to himself, continuing to pull on the mail shirt.

‘Aye. The manling thought it clever to put his case to the Emperor with petitions and protest marches. Old Karl Franz chose to respond, quite sensibly, with cavalry charges.’

The peddlers were starting to back away.

‘An insurrectionist,’ Felix heard one mutter.

Felix felt his face flush. ‘It was yet another cruel and unjust tax. A silver piece for every window, indeed. To make it worse, all the fat merchants bricked up their windows and the Altdorf militia went around knocking holes in the side of poor folks’ hovels. We were right to speak out.’

‘There’s a reward for the capture of insurrectionists,’ the peddler said. ‘A big reward.’

Felix stared at him. ‘Of course, the Imperial cavalry were no match for my companion’s axe,’ he said. ‘Such carnage! Heads, legs, arms everywhere. He stood on a pile of bodies.’

‘They called for archers,’ Gotrek said. ‘We departed down a back alley. Being spitted from afar would have been an unseemly death.’

The fat peddler looked at his companions then at Gotrek, then at Felix, then back at his companions. ‘A sensible man keeps out of politics,’ he said to the man who had talked of rewards. He looked at Felix. ‘No offence, sir.’ ‘None taken,’ Felix said. ‘You are absolutely correct.’ ‘Insurrectionist or no,’ the old woman said, ‘may Sigmar bless you if you bring my little Gunter back.’

‘He is not little, Lise,’ the innkeeper said. ‘He is a strapping young man. Still, I hope you bring my son back. I am old and I need him to chop the wood and shoe the horses and lift the kegs and—’

‘I am touched by your paternal concern, sir,’ Felix interrupted. He pulled his leather cap down on his head. Gotrek got up and looked at him. He beat his chest with one meaty hand. ‘Armour is for women and girly elves,’ he said.

‘Perhaps I had best wear it, Gotrek. If I am to return alive with the tale of your deeds – as I did, after all, swear to do.’

‘You have a point, manling. And remember that is not all you swore to do.’ He turned to the innkeeper. ‘How will we find the Darkstone Ring?’

Felix felt his mouth go dry. He fought to keep his hands from shaking.

‘There is a trail. It runs from the road. I will take you to its start.’

‘Good,’ Gotrek said. ‘This is too good an opportunity to miss. Tonight I will atone my sins and stand among the Iron Halls of my fathers. Great Grungni willing.’

He made a peculiar sign over his chest with his clenched right hand. 'Come, manling, let us go.' He strode out the door.

Felix picked up his pack. At the doorway the old woman stopped him and pressed something into his hand.

'Please, sir,' she said. 'Take this. It is a charm to Sigmar. It will protect you. My little Gunter wears its twin.'

And much good it's done him, Felix was about to say, but the expression on her face stopped him. It held fear, concern and perhaps hope. He was touched.

'I'll do my best, frau.'

Outside, the sky was bright with the green witchlight of the moons. Felix opened his hand. In it was a small iron hammer on a fine-linked chain. He shrugged and hung it round his neck. Gotrek and the old man were already moving down the road. He had to run to catch up.

'What do you think these are, manling?' Gotrek said, bending close to the ground. Ahead of them, the road continued on towards Hartzroch and Bogenhafen. Felix leaned on the league marker. This was the edge of the trail. Felix hoped the innkeeper had returned home safely.

'Tracks,' he said. 'Going north.'

'Very good, manling. They are coach tracks and they take the trail north to the Darkstone Ring.'

'The black coach?' Felix said.

'I hope so. What a glorious night! All my prayers are answered. A chance to atone and to get revenge on the swine who nearly ran me over.' Gotrek cackled gleefully but Felix could sense a change in him. He seemed tense,

as if suspecting that his hour of destiny were arriving and he would meet it badly. He seemed unusually talkative.

‘A coach? Does this coven consist of noblemen, manling? Is your Empire so very corrupt?’

Felix shook his head. ‘I don’t know. It may have a noble leader. The members are most likely local folk. They say the taint of Chaos runs deep in these out of the way places.’

Gotrek shook his head and for the first time ever he looked dismayed. ‘I could weep for the folly of your people, manling. To be so corrupted that your rulers could sell themselves over to the powers of darkness, that is a terrible thing.’

‘Not all men are so,’ Felix said angrily. ‘True, some seek easy power or the pleasures of the flesh, but they are few. Most people keep the faith. Anyway, the Elder Race are not so pure. I have heard tales of whole armies of dwarfs dedicated to the Ruinous Powers.’

Gotrek gave a low angry growl and spat on the ground.

Felix gripped the hilt of his sword tighter. He wondered whether he had pushed the Trollslayer too far.

‘You are correct,’ Gotrek said, his voice soft and cold.

‘We do not lightly talk about such things. We have vowed eternal war against the abominations you mention and their dark masters.’

‘As have my own people. We have our witch hunts and our laws.’

Gotrek shook his head. ‘Your people do not understand.

They are soft and decadent and live far from the war.

They do not understand the terrible things which gnaw at the roots of the world and seek to undermine us all.



Witch hunts? Hah!’ He spat on the ground. ‘Laws! There is only one way to meet the threat of Chaos.’ He brandished his axe meaningfully.

They trudged wearily through the forest. Overhead, the moons gleamed feverishly. Morrslieb had become ever brighter, and now its green glow stained the sky. A light mist had gathered and the terrain they moved through was bleak and wild. Rocks broke through the turf like plague spots breaking through the skin of the world. Sometimes Felix thought he could hear great wings passing overhead, but when he looked up he could see only the glow in the sky. The mist distorted and spread so that it looked as though they walked along the bed of some infernal sea.

There was a sense of wrongness about this place, Felix decided. The air tasted foul and the hairs on the nape of his neck constantly prickled. Back when he had been a boy in Altdorf he had sat in his father’s house and watched the sky grow black with menacing clouds. Then had come the most monstrous storm in living memory. Now he felt the same sense of anticipation. Mighty forces were gathering close to here, he was certain. He felt like an insect crawling over the body of a giant that could at any moment awake and crush him.

Even Gotrek seemed oppressed. He had fallen silent and did not even mumble to himself as he usually did. Now and again he would stop and motion for Felix to stand quiet, then he would stand and sniff the air. Felix could see that his whole body tensed as if he strained with every nerve to catch the slightest trace of something. Then they would move on.

Felix's muscles all felt tight with tension. He wished he had not come. Surely, he told himself, my obligation to the dwarf does not mean I must face certain death.

Perhaps I can slip away in the mist.

He gritted his teeth. He prided himself on being an honourable man, and the debt he owed the dwarf was real. The dwarf had risked his life to save him. Granted, at the time he had not known Gotrek was seeking death, courting it as a man courts a desirable lady. It still left him under an obligation.

He remembered the riotous drunken evening in the taverns of the Maze when they had sworn blood-brotherhood in that curious dwarfish rite and he had agreed to help Gotrek in his quest.

Gotrek wished his name remembered and his deeds recalled. When he had found out that Felix was a poet, the dwarf had asked Felix to accompany him. At the time, in the warm glow of beery camaraderie, it had seemed a splendid idea. The Trollslayer's doomed quest had struck Felix as excellent material for an epic poem, one that would make him famous.

Little did I know, Felix thought, that it would lead to this. Hunting for monsters on Geheimnisnacht. He smiled ironically. It was easy to sing of brave deeds in the taverns and playhalls where horror was a thing conjured by the words of skilled craftsmen. Out here, though, it was different. His bowels felt loose with fear and the oppressive atmosphere made him want to run screaming.

Still, he tried to console himself, this is fit subject matter for a poem. If only I live to write it.

The woods became deeper and more tangled. The trees took on the aspect of twisted, uncanny beings. Felix felt as if they were watching him. He tried to dismiss the thought as fantasy but the mist and the ghastly moonlight only stimulated his imagination. He felt as if every pool of shadow contained a monster.

Felix looked down at the dwarf. Gotrek's face held a mixture of anticipation and fear. Felix had thought him immune to terror but now he realised it was not so. A ferocious will drove him to seek his doom. Feeling that his own death might be near at hand, Felix asked a question that he had long been afraid to utter.

'Herr Trollslayer, what was it you did that you must atone for? What crime drives you to punish yourself so?' Gotrek looked up to him, then turned his head to gaze off into the night. Felix watched the cable-like muscles of his neck ripple like serpents as he did so.

'If another man asked me that question I would slaughter him. I make allowances for your youth and ignorance and the friendship rite we have undergone. Such a death would make me a kin-slayer. That is a terrible crime. Such crimes we do not talk about.'

Felix had not realised the dwarf was so attached to him. Gotrek looked up at him as if expecting a response.

'I understand,' Felix said.

'Do you, manling? Do you really?' The Trollslayer's voice was as harsh as stones breaking.

Felix smiled ruefully. In that moment he saw the gap that separated man from dwarf. He would never understand their strange taboos, their obsession with oaths and order and pride. He could not see what would drive the Trollslayer to carry out his self-imposed death sentence.

‘Your people are too harsh with themselves,’ he said. ‘Yours are too soft,’ the Trollslayer replied. They fell into silence. Both were startled by a quiet, mad laugh. Felix turned, whipping up his blade into the guard position. Gotrek raised his axe.

Out of the mists something shambled. Once it had been a man, Felix decided. The outline was still there. It was as if some mad god held the creature close to a daemonic fire until flesh dripped and ran, then had left it to set in a new and abhorrent form.

‘This night we will dance,’ it said, in a high-pitched voice that held no hint of sanity. ‘Dance and touch.’ It reached out gently to Felix and stroked his arm. Felix recoiled in horror as fingers like clumps of maggots rose towards his face.

‘This night at the stone we will dance and touch and rub.’ It made as if to embrace him. It smiled, showing short, pointed teeth. Felix stood quietly. He felt like a spectator, distanced from the event that was happening. He pulled back and put the point of his sword against the thing’s chest.

‘Come no closer,’ Felix warned. The thing smiled. Its mouth seemed to grow wider, it showed more small sharp teeth. Its lips rolled back until the bottom half of the face seemed all wet glistening gum and the jaw sank lower like that of a snake. It pushed forward against the sword until beads of blood glistened on its chest. It gave a gurgling, idiotic laugh.

‘Dance and touch and rub and eat,’ it said, and with inhuman swiftness it writhed around the sword and leapt for Felix.

Swift as it was, the Trollslayer was swifter. In mid-leap his axe caught its neck. The head rolled into the night; a red fountain gushed.

This is not happening, thought Felix.

‘What was that? A daemon?’ Gotrek asked. Felix could hear the excitement in his voice.

‘I think it was once a man,’ Felix said. ‘One of the tainted ones marked by Chaos. They are abandoned at birth.’

‘That one spoke your tongue.’

‘Sometimes the taint does not show till they are older. Relatives think they are sick and protect them till they make their way to the woods and vanish.’

‘Their kin protect such abominations?’

‘It happens. We don’t talk about it. It is hard to turn your back on people you love even if they change.’

The dwarf stared at him in disbelief, then shook his head. ‘Too soft,’ he said. ‘Too soft.’

---

**GOTREK AND FELIX: THE FIRST OMNIBUS** can be purchased in all Games Workshop and other hobby stores, or direct from [this website](#) and GW mail order.

Price £8.99 (UK) / \$10.99 (US) / \$15.00 (CAN)

ISBN 13: 978 1 84416 374 8

- Bookshops: Distributed in the UK and the US by Simon & Schuster Books.
- Games & hobby stores: Distributed in UK and US by Games Workshop.
- UK mail order: 0115-91 40 000      US mail order: 1-800-394-GAME

- Online: Buy direct care of Games Workshop's web store by going to [www.blacklibrary.com](http://www.blacklibrary.com) or [www.games-workshop.com](http://www.games-workshop.com)
- To contact BL Publishing, call **0115 916 8245**

