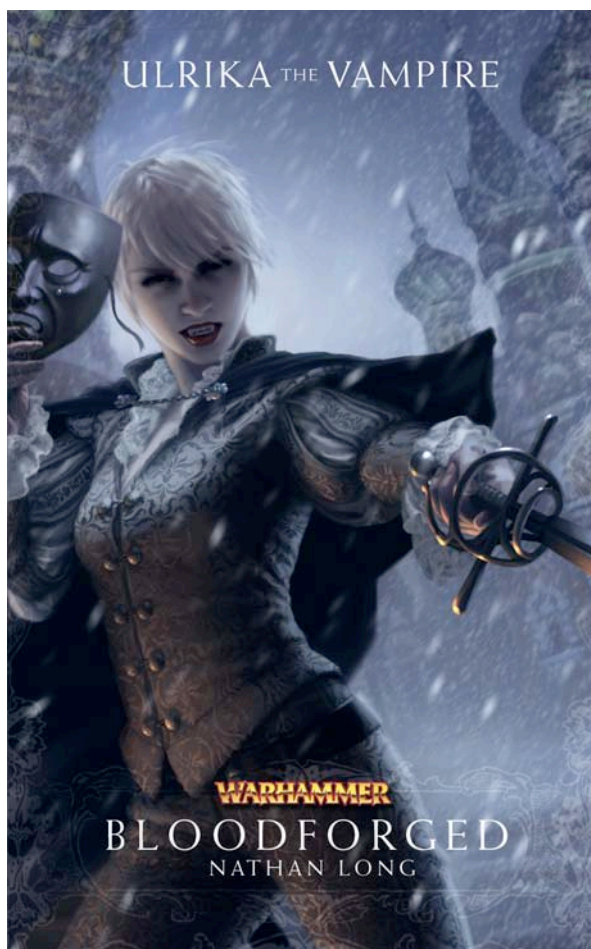




BLACK LIBRARY



# **BLOODFORGED**

*An Ulrika the Vampire novel*

*By Nathan Long*

Defying the law of the Lahmian vampires, Ulrika journeys to the Chaos-besieged city of Praag to seek old friends and glory in battle. On her arrival, she finds a devastated but defiant people and the invaders repelled. But the Ruinous Powers can take many forms, and now a more insidious threat is rising from within – a Slaaneshi cult that seeks to claim dominion in Praag. Shunned by her Lahmian sisters, decried by the humans she seeks to protect, Ulrika treads a lonely path as she tries to find the root of this destructive plot. Caught between the will of the vampires and the insane designs of Chaos sorcerers and cultists, Ulrika must call upon all of her cunning and savagery if she is to triumph.

## **About the Author**

Nathan Long was a struggling screenwriter for fifteen years, during which time he had three movies made and a handful of live-action and animated TV episodes produced. Now he is a novelist, and is enjoying it much more. For Black Library he has written three Warhammer novels featuring the Blackhearts, and he took over the Gotrek and Felix series, starting with the eighth instalment, Orcslayer. He is currently writing the Ulrika the Vampire series.

*More Nathan Long from the Black Library*

**BLOODBORN**

**BLACKHEARTS: THE OMNIBUS**

*(Contains the novels Valnir's Bane, The Broken Lance & Tainted Blood)*

*More Vampire novels from the Black Library*

**VAMPIRE WARS: THE VON CARSTEIN TRILOGY**

*by Steven Savile*

*(Contains the novels Inheritance, Dominion & Retribution)*

**THE VAMPIRE GENEVIEVE**

*by Jack Yeovil*

*(Contains the novels Drachenfels, Genevieve Undead, Beasts in Velvet & Silver Nails)*

*Gotrek & Felix*

**GOTREK & FELIX: THE FIRST OMNIBUS**

*by William King*

*(Contains books 1-3: Trollslayer, Skavenslayer & Daemonslayer)*

**GOTREK & FELIX: THE second OMNIBUS**

*by William King*

*(Contains books 4-6: Dragonslayer, Beastslayer & Vampireslayer)*

**GOTREK & FELIX: THE THIRD OMNIBUS**

*by William King and Nathan Long*

*(Contains books 7-9: Giantslayer, Orcslayer & Manslayer)*

**Book 10 – ELFSLAYER**

*by Nathan Long*

**Book 11 – SHAMANSLAYER**

*by Nathan Long*

**Book 12 – ZOMBIESLAYER**

*by Nathan Long*

The following is an excerpt from *Bloodforged* by Nathan Long. Published by the Black Library. Games Workshop, Willow Road, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, UK.

Copyright © Games Workshop Ltd, 2011. All rights reserved. Reproduction prohibited, in any form, including on the internet.

For more details or to contact us visit the Black Library website:  
[www.blacklibrary.com](http://www.blacklibrary.com).

‘YOU WILL NOT return to Sylvania,’ said Lady Hermione.  
‘And you will no longer be Countess of Nachthafen.’

‘But – but, why?’ asked Gabriella.

‘Because she has ordered it so,’ said Hermione.

Everything was changing, Ulrika thought sourly as she watched Countess Gabriella struggle to maintain her composure, but everything remained the same.

Ulrika had done all this too often before – had stood here in attendance in the drawing room of Lady Hermione, the leader of the Lahmian vampires in Nuln, had suffocated beneath a long wig and layers of dresses and petticoats, had listened to her mistress, Countess Gabriella, have words with Hermione, and had wished she were anywhere else in the world. The only difference betwixt then and now was that Lady Hermione had a new name, and a new disguise to go with it, and it appeared Gabriella was about to be given the same.

Three weeks had passed since the monstrous Strigoi, Murnau, and his army of ghouls had attacked the Lahmian sisterhood at Mondthaus, Lady Hermione’s country estate, and since Witch Hunter Templar Captain Meinhart Schenk had come within a hair of discovering the sisterhood’s true nature – three weeks also, since Gabriella had killed Witch Hunter Friedrich Holmann when Ulrika had refused to do it. In those three weeks

prodigious amounts of work had gone into making it appear the sisters had all died, and to establish new identities for each of them.

They had faked their deaths after Countess Gabriella and Lady Hermione had decided that continuing in their current identities was impossible. They were certain Schenk and the witch hunters would never stop wondering if they were vampires, even if nothing could be proved, and their every action would be scrutinised.

And so, the day after the attack, women were found who bore some resemblance to Gabriella, Hermione, Ulrika and the beautiful Famke, Hermione's protégée. They were dressed in appropriate clothes, then torn apart as if by ghouls, with special care taken that their faces were shredded and unrecognisable.

Then began a great shifting of behind-the-scenes resources. Bank accounts were closed and money transferred, titles and deeds to houses and other properties changed hands, always through third parties, and wills and birth certificates were forged and ancient family trees pruned and grafted so as to bear fresh new fruit.

At the end of this process, an old man appeared on the doorstep of the recently deceased Lady Hermione von Auerbach, claiming to be the grieving Lord Lucius von Auerbach, a distant cousin to whom Hermione had willed her properties. With him were his two beautiful young daughters, Helena and Frederika.

Lord Lucius claimed the family had come to Nuln to mourn the passing of their cousin, and afterwards decided to take up residence in her mansion. In reality, of course, Lord Lucius was a mere blood-swain – a slave of Hermione's, chosen for his sad, noble face – and his two young daughters were none other than Hermione

and Famke themselves, remade with paint and henna and the subtle illusions that were the Lahmian sisterhood's stock in trade. Lady Hermione's hair, which had before been a rich chocolate-brown, had been straightened and lightened to a honey-blonde, while Famke's hair, which had been the colour of white gold, had been darkened to the same shade and given a more youthful cut. This and a change of dress, manner and voice appeared all that was required to make Nuln think them entirely different women, and Ulrika had to admit that, even though she was in on the game, when they were in public, she had a hard time remembering they were the same women she had known since she had arrived in Nuln the month before.

'The Queen wishes me to stay in Nuln?' asked Gabriella.

'Yes,' said Hermione. 'With the deaths of Rosamund, Karlotta, Alfina and Dagmar, she believes we are short-handed here, and as you performed so...' Here Hermione pursed her lips and looked as if she would rather eat a decomposing rat than continue. 'So admirably, she has decided you will stay and take over Dagmar's position, opening a new brothel in the Handelbezirk and continuing her work gathering information there. You, I and Mathilda will be the Queen's eyes here for the foreseeable future.'

'But my place is in Nachthafen,' said Gabriella, upset. 'Sylvania cannot go unwatched.'

'I am informed that someone will be found,' said Hermione. 'And Krieger is dead now. A new threat will not arise so quickly again from that quarter.'

'We can only hope,' said Gabriella, sitting back. 'I do not like this change.'

‘You can be sure I like it even less,’ said Hermione, sniffing. ‘But as the Queen commands, so must we do. Now we must come up with a suitable name and guise for your new position.’

Ulrika turned towards the window that looked into Hermione’s back garden, their words fading away as she stared into the moonlit night. So they would stay in Nuln. It was the last thing she would have wished for. Too many things she would rather have forgotten had happened here. Sylvania, for all its isolation, had at least been simple and ordered. When they had come here things had become complicated.

The murders of the vampiresses Rosamund, Karlotta, Alfina and Dagmar had threatened to expose all the Lahmians, and the hunt for their killer had set them at each other’s throats. Hermione had suspected Mathilda of attempting to take her position, and had accused Gabriella of being a von Carstein spy, out to weaken the sisterhood. There had been betrayal, bloodshed and death, and Gabriella and Ulrika had lost nearly everything, including their lives.

None of these things, however, pained Ulrika as much as the death of Templar Friedrich Holmann, and the worst of it was, she could blame no one but herself for the misery it had caused her. They had met by chance, both on the trail of the killer, and had Ulrika been wise, she would have killed him the moment she saw him. She had not been wise. She had been weak. She had tricked him into thinking she was a vampire hunter and left him alive, and as their paths continued to cross during the investigation, she had come to like him, so much so, that at a moment when he was overwhelmed by ghouls and might have died, she had exposed her fangs and claws to save him.

Like her, Holmann had found himself weak, and was unable to kill her, and that had been his downfall. He had defended her against other witch hunters, and was too ashamed to return to his order. He had intended to run away, to leave the Empire, and Ulrika would gladly have let him, but Countess Gabriella would not allow it. She had told Ulrika that, having revealed her true nature to Holmann, she had left herself only two choices – she could kill him, or she could feed on him and make him a blood-swain.

Ulrika could not bring herself to do either. She could not kill a man who had saved her life, and she would not make a slave of him – for that was what became of those upon whom a vampire fed. They lost their will, and became addicted to the pleasure of being bled. She had liked Holmann for what he was, for his strength and sadness and honour, and the idea of turning him into a lapdog who pawed at her knee and showed his throat nauseated her. So she had refused to make the choice, and Gabriella had done the deed instead, feeding on him, then snapping his neck. Things had not been well between Ulrika and the countess since.

A movement out of the corner of her eye turned Ulrika's head. Through the diamond panes of the window, she saw Famke beckoning to her from a stone bench set against the balustrade of the veranda, a lute in one hand. Even with her hair darkened and sitting in moonlight, the girl looked like a sunny summer day – a strange thing to say of a vampire, but undoubtedly why her mistress had chosen her to be one.

Ulrika looked back at Gabriella and Hermione, still deep in discussion about Gabriella's transformation, then slipped out of the room to the corridor and through the back door to the garden. It was a cold clear spring night,



but Famke didn't mind the cold any more than any vampire did, and was dressed only in a light gown of rose-coloured silk. Her feet were bare.

'Good evening, sister,' Ulrika said, bowing and crossing to her. 'Will you play me a song?'

Famke grimaced at the lute. 'I am practising my scales. Lady Hermione says a Lahmian must be a perfect courtier, and a perfect courtier must be skilled in all the arts.'

'Then I am far from perfect,' said Ulrika. 'All I know are Kossar drinking songs, and those aren't fit for court.' She pulled off her long wig, revealing her short sand-coloured hair, and sat down beside Famke with a sigh. 'Did you hear? We shall be staying in Nuln.'

Famke nodded. 'I am glad. I would have missed you. But perhaps you are not so pleased. You looked so sad staring out the window.'

Ulrika paused, then shrugged. 'I... it was nothing.'

Famke put a hand on her arm. 'You will forget him.'

Ulrika looked up, chagrined that she was so easy to read. 'I hope so,' she said.

Famke smiled sympathetically. 'Of course you will,' she said. 'He was only a man.'

Ulrika murmured noncommittally as the girl bent her fingers awkwardly around the neck of the lute, trying to make a chord. Famke had been sorely abused by her father and other men before Hermione had rescued her and given her the dark kiss. She could see no good in man, any man.

'It's only that he dealt with us honourably,' Ulrika said after a moment. 'And I wish I had been allowed to deal with him honourably in turn. I understand the need for secrecy, but—' She paused, looking over her shoulder at the drawing room's bright window. 'Sometimes I

wonder if she killed him out of spite. She...’ A flash of memory overwhelmed her – the mob in the Industriepplatz surging around their coach, howling for their blood. Gabriella throwing the maid, Lotte, to their savage embrace, so she and Ulrika might escape. ‘She can be cruel.’

Famke nodded, then also glanced warily at the window. ‘When Hermione turned me,’ she whispered, leaning close, ‘I thought she was the most beautiful, wise, wonderful woman in all the world, but now—’ She shook her head, her eyes faraway. ‘She seemed to go mad during the trouble – attacking your mistress, thinking everyone was against her. It frightened me.’

‘Aye,’ said Ulrika, combing out her wig with her fingers. ‘I know it is a struggle to survive, but there must be a way to do it... differently.’

She slouched back against the balustrade. Famke did the same. Their shoulders touched.

‘I keep dreaming of running away,’ said Ulrika. ‘Leaving them and all their cat-clawing intrigue behind and living free.’

Famke gasped and turned her head, her lips almost touching Ulrika’s ear. ‘I’ve dreamed the same thing!’ She motioned towards the house. ‘I get so tired of walls. Even the garden is a little box.’ She sighed. ‘I used to love the outside. Before. Now, even with all the nice things mistress gives me, I sometimes feel I’m in a coffin – dead after all.’ She laid her head on Ulrika’s shoulder. ‘Wouldn’t it be a wonderful adventure to run away together, like two princesses in a book.’

Ulrika smiled and looked over the garden wall, and over the walls and rooftops of the houses beyond it. ‘Aye. Two horses and the open road, just as my father and I used to ride on the oblast. No destination, no

obligations, our swords at our hips, and the horizon a hundred miles away.'

'We would need a little more than that,' said Famke, laughing. 'A coach to protect us during the day, a driver, I suppose, a swain or two so we could feed.'

Ulrika grunted, feeling as if every item Famke added were being piled onto her back. 'Then we might as well not leave at all,' she said, hotter than she meant to. 'We would be bringing the coffin with us.'

'But travelling without them would be folly,' said Famke. 'What if we were to be far from shelter at sunrise?'

'I know, I know,' Ulrika sighed. 'And this is why we stay in walled gardens and airless rooms, but it ruins the fantasy a bit, don't you think?'

Famke smiled sweetly. 'Well, if it is just a fantasy, then we shall have winged horses instead of a coach, and shall sleep on Mannslieb so we will never see the sun.'

Ulrika laughed, but before she could make a reply the veranda door opened. Ulrika and Famke looked up, then sprang apart, guilty, as they saw their mistresses glaring at them from the doorway.

'Ulrika! Come along,' said Gabriella sharply. 'We are done here. It is time to go.'

'Famke, what are you doing?' snapped Hermione. 'You are meant to be practising.'

Ulrika and Famke rose quickly from the bench and curtsied, saying 'yes, mistress,' at the same time, but as Ulrika hurried to follow Gabriella, she stole a glance back to Famke and exchanged a secret smile with her.

I wish you winged horses, sister, she thought, then went into the house.

***BLOODFORGED*** can be purchased direct from this website and GW mail order, Games Workshop and other hobby stores, and better bookstores.

In the UK: Price £7.99

ISBN: 978-1-84970-013-9

In the US: Price \$8.99 (\$10.99 Canada)

ISBN: 978-1-84970-014-6

- Online: Buy direct care of Games Workshop's webstore by going to [www.blacklibrary.com](http://www.blacklibrary.com) or [www.games-workshop.com](http://www.games-workshop.com).
- 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