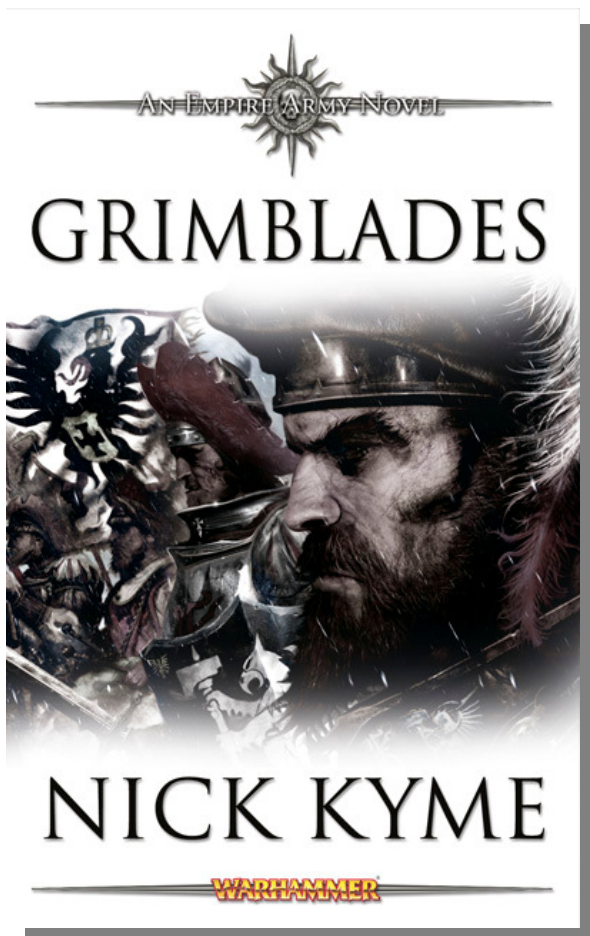




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# ***GRIMBLADES***

## ***An Empire Army Novel***

*By Nick Kyme*

When orcs and goblins invade the Empire, the Emperor Dieter IV does nothing. While the other elector counts bicker, Prince Wilhelm is left to defend the Reikland alone. The Grimblades are among his brave army that opposes the greenskins. Amidst desperate war across the Empire and a plot to kill the prince, the Grimblades must survive this orc invasion and be victorious.

### **About the Author**

Nick Kyme hails from Grimsby, a small town on the North East coast of England known for its fish (a food which, ironically, he dislikes profusely).

Nick moved to Nottingham in 2003 to work on White Dwarf magazine as a Layout Designer, before moving on to become a Journalist, and has had three short stories published in *Inferno* in that time. Nick now works for the Black Library as an Editor and has written a number of novels and short stories.



Visit Nick at [his website](#) to hear about all his latest BL novels and read his rambling blog.

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The following is an excerpt from *Grimblades* by Nick Kyme.

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‘SOUND THE ATTACK, signal the rest of the regiment!’ He drew his sword. ‘Grimblades! Forward!’

Rechts beat out a battle rhythm on the small drum lashed over his shoulder for his brother soldiers to follow. Lenkmann found a clear spot and unfurled the banner that had been on his back. Swinging it back and forth, he signalled their position to the other Grimblades.

Cursing his own stupidity, Eber snapped the end of his halberd haft with his foot to free the weapon from the trap, and stormed at the beastmen.

From either flank came the growling of hounds, the ungor’s whelp creatures, too muscled and hairy to be mere dogs. Out the corner of his eye, Eber saw Masbrecht and Keller move to intercept the hounds. A tract of heavy scrub and bracken stood between him and his fellow halberdiers.

Volker had given up the fight now. He was simply running for his life. Brand lingered, stopping occasionally to gut an ungor. One that had got ahead of the fleeing halberdiers raised its club to stave in Volker’s skull before Brand used the last of his throwing knives to kill it. The hunter flinched as the blade whipped past his face, but nodded a hasty thanks to Brand.

‘Move, Grimblades, move!’ Karlich raged. He held the line with Lenkmann but could have overtaken Varveiter who was finding the pace hard to match. Eber outstripped the old soldier by many yards, spurred on by guilt.

Rather than negotiate the foliage, Eber just barrelled through it. He met Volker first and kept on going, smacking

straight into a charging ungor with all the force of a bull. Eber used his shoulder like a battering ram. He felt the crunch of bone as he met the beast, the impact throwing it off its feet. Another came at him from the shadows, shrieking like some mutant swine. Eber swept his halberd in a high arc and cut off the ungor's head. He impaled a third with a thrust. He cried as a club smashed against his shoulder guard and dented the metal. Numbness spread up his arm like ice, and he nearly dropped his weapon. To be disarmed was to die, so Eber held on.

A slew of blood arced from the ungor's neck and it fell, Varveiter's halberd following it.

'Eager for the killing, eh, Eber?' Varveiter said between breaths.

Eber nodded as a deeper cry tore from the forest depths. Ungor corpses littered the floor, but more were coming and something else, something larger.

A muscled gor, a much bigger beastman kindred, emerged out of the gloom. A coiled goat's horn hung from a ragged belt attached around its thick waist, and it clutched a rusty cleaver in its massive hand.

Tilting its head back, the gor released a ululating bellow that resonated around the Reikwald, setting a tremor off in Karlich's spine. The remaining ungor gathered to the stronger beast, acknowledging its superiority. More whelp hounds stalked at the periphery of the group.

'Hold, lad,' gasped Varveiter. 'We need to wait for the others and form rank.'

But Eber was already plunging forward to meet the gor's challenge.

'Wait!'

Eber wasn't listening. He was determined to make up for his earlier mistake and if that meant fighting the gor, then so be it.

With the gor easily a foot taller, even the mighty Reiklander appeared puny next to the brawny beastman. The lesser creatures seemed to sense the challenge unfolding

between their herd-leader and the man-skin and didn't interfere. Instead, they sped forward on reverse-jointed limbs to fight the others.

'Eber!' Varveiter cried out as the gor loomed over his Reikland brother. But his attention was quickly forced elsewhere as the ungor came at him. He blocked a knife slash with his haft then punched the creature in its snout to daze it. Ignoring the pain in his fist, Varveiter swept his halberd around to cut the goat-like legs from under another creature whilst the first ungor staggered. A thrust to the belly did for that one too.

'Eber!' he cried again, only able to take a few steps before another ungor blocked his path. Its spear thrust was deflected by Varveiter's tasset, but it deadened his leg and he half-collapsed. Seizing its advantage, the beastman dropped its weapon and tried to rip Varveiter's throat out instead. The old soldier turned just in time, putting his armoured forearm into the creature's mouth. He roared when the ungor bit into the leather of his vambrace. Though small, the beast had a jaw like a blacksmith's vice and kept on pressing.

Its foul breath assailed Varveiter, redolent of rotten meat and dung. Just when he thought he'd pass out from the pain, the ungor's eyes widened and it let go.

Brand was revealed behind it, wiping the flat of his dagger on his tunic. His cold, dead eyes regarded Varveiter for a moment before he offered the old soldier a hand up.

'Thank you, son,' he said as he was being hauled to his feet.

Brand gave a curt nod.

'Are you hurt, Siegen?' It was a voice like a blade being drawn from a scabbard, but it held a note of familial concern. Brand was not Varveiter's son but the killer regarded him like a father figure nonetheless, and was the only Grimblade left who used his first name.

'I'm fine. Go help Eber.'

The brutish Reiklander was holding his own against the gor. Trained to use polearms in the Grünburg barracks, Eber

made the most of those lessons now and kept the beastman at bay with sharp thrusts from his halberd. But the tactic also served another purpose. The gor was getting more and more frustrated, and increasingly reckless. It stomped and snorted, aiming savage swipes that sliced only air or clanged against Eber's blade. One attack overstretched it, bringing its head forward. Seeing his chance, Eber lashed out and cut off one of its ram-like horns. Howling, the gor backed off a step and the Empire soldier came forwards. Eber jabbed his halberd into the beast's thigh and drew blood. But it wasn't enough to slow the creature, let alone kill it, and the gor came on with renewed fury.

Varveiter looked on as Brand ploughed into the forest after Eber. He could barely move, the pain in his leg was so bad. The bruised flesh pressed against his tasset as it swelled and drove hot pins of agony in the old soldier's thigh. Despite the danger, he bent down to loosen the buckle and strap. A shadow passed across him as Varveiter came back up and was face to face with a snarling ungor. He scrambled for his halberd, ramming the tip of its haft into the ground like a defensive stake. The charging ungor impaled itself, spit through like a boar, but left Varveiter defenceless as a pair of whelp hounds scrambled through the brush to savage him.

The old soldier licked his lips before balling his fists.

'Come on then, you ugly bastards.'

One of the hounds leapt at him, as the second rounded on Varveiter's blind side to come at his unprotected flank.

He grimaced, but the expected impact didn't come. There was a loud thunk of flesh on metal as Sergeant Karlich put his shield between Varveiter and the leaping hound. A yelp came from the second as Keller stuck it with his halberd's point. Masbrecht, also returning from the flanks, staved in the creature's skull with a hammer.

'Sigmar's breath, they do stink!' he spat.

'No worse than Eber,' laughed Keller, a cruel smile splitting his hawkish features.



‘Aye, and he’ll be worse still dead,’ said Karlich. ‘Now shut your mouths and follow me.’

The sergeant led them the rest of the way to Eber, forcing back the ungor and what was left of the hounds. More were coming though, summoned by the death cries of their herd and the reek of blood.

‘Form rank!’ shouted Karlich when Rechts and Lenkmann had joined them.

‘The rest of the regiment is just behind us,’ Lenkmann reported, planting the banner and drawing his sword.

Rechts beat out the order to form up with his drum. The others fell in dutifully.

When it saw the gathering of men the gor backed away, recognising a threat. Eber was content to let it go. His muscles burned from the effort of fighting it, but he still took up his post in the fighting rank.

‘They’re regrouping for another charge,’ said Varveiter. He’d freed his halberd and levelled it forward at the same angle as the others. Volker too had his familiar polearm, as did Brand, both collected from Rechts who’d strapped the weapons to his back before the engagement.

‘Hold this line!’ hollered Sergeant Karlich. The beasts outnumbered them, but they were a rabble. The front rankers only needed to keep them back until the rest of the regiment arrived. Already, he could hear soldiers crashing through the undergrowth behind them.

The gor herd-leader roared, snarling and lashing at the ungor trammelling the foliage to close with the man-skins.

‘Brace and meet them!’ bellowed Karlich. In response, the angle of the halberds lowered again by just a fraction. Each man put his foot behind the base of the haft. Maddened by bloodlust, the ungor and whelp hounds struck the thicket of steel and were scattered. Some were shredded, others impaled. Any that got through were cut down by Karlich’s sword or brained by Masbrecht’s hammer.

‘Thrust!’ came the sergeant’s next order and each man drove his halberd forward to strike a second wave of ungor.

Rechts cried out when a rusty blade pierced his shoulder. Karlich battered the creature senseless with a blow from his shield before it could follow up, then Lenkmann stabbed it in the throat whilst it was prone.

‘Stay together.’

At least a dozen more dead and injured ungor littered the ground, but with the gor at their backs the rest dare not falter.

‘Taal’s mercy, how many more of these swine are there?’ asked Volker.

‘Come on, come on...’ Karlich muttered under his breath. The sound of reinforcements was close, but was it close enough?

The battle was fierce, and Karlich dare not avert his attention from it for even a second. In the end, it was the ungor that gave him his answer. The vigour drained out of them like air from a pig’s bladder and they retreated. Even the brutish gor lost its nerve. The scent of so much man-flesh and Empire-forged steel spooked rather than emboldened it. Bringing the coiled horn to its bovine mouth, it blew a long discordant note.

Like cattle fearing the drover’s whip, the beasts took flight. Some reverted to all fours, galloping awkwardly alongside the hounds; others jerked with two-legged strides.

Karlich felt the rest of his regiment at his back and found his confidence renewed.

‘All Grimblades,’ he rallied, ‘advance!’

Rechts drummed the pace as Lenkmann raised the banner. The forest was thinning and the beastmen headed to a clearing.

Forty men drove nigh-on seventy beasts, broken by their good order and stolid defence.

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

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