

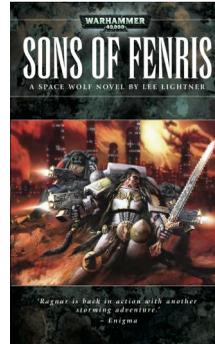
# ***SONS OF FENRIS***

*The fifth Space Wolf novel*

*By Lee Lightner*

*Savage and barbaric, the mighty Space Wolves are amongst the most ferocious of the Emperor's Space Marines. Many times has their feral fury been the deciding factor in key battles against the enemies of mankind.*

*Together with the other members of the Wolfblade, Ragnar is sent to the planet Hyades, where the Space Wolves run into their ancient rivals, the Dark Angels. Can the two Space Marine Chapters put aside their ancient enmity and learn to work together before the dark forces of Chaos destroy them all?*



## **About the Author**

Lee Lightner is the penname for two authors who live in Baltimore, USA. Lifelong friends, they are both avid Space Wolf fans.

*In the same series*

### **The Space Wolf Omnibus**

by William King

(Contains the novels *Space Wolf*, *Ragnar's Claw* and *Grey Hunter*)

### **Wolfblade**

By William King

The following is an excerpt from *Sons of Fenris* by Lee Lightner. Published by the Black Library. Games Workshop, Willow Road, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, UK.

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SPLASHES OF COLOUR painted the clouds with a swirl of reds, oranges and yellows, silhouetting the black and grey towers of Saint Harman, the once great capital city of Corinthus V. Wolf Lord Ragnar Blackmane found a sense of satisfaction in the ability of instruments of Imperial justice to duplicate the dawn of a new day in the middle of the night. Every explosion from the Imperial artillery, every bombardment from the fleet above, left its own mark on the tapestry of the sky.

Ragnar took an extra moment to commit this battle to memory. So many wars on countless worlds could make a Space Marine forget. The wars never ended for humanity's defenders. They constantly went forth to do the will of the Emperor of Mankind and battle the enemies of the Imperium. The Imperial Guard had fought the Chaos incursion for almost a year. After only a month, Ragnar and his great company of Space Wolves had turned the tide of the campaign.

Once Corinthus V had produced munitions and vehicles for the Imperium's vast armies, and the populace took pride in their work, too much pride in fact, looking to the glory of the machine instead of keeping their faith in the Emperor. While the citizens had performed their duties making ammunition for the Space Marine Chapters and the Imperial Guard, including Ragnar's own Space Wolves, the taint of Chaos had slipped onto Corinthus V. Every one of the Space Marines, the ultimate warriors of the Imperium, knew the dangers of Chaos. Daemons from the warp whispered twisted thoughts, corrupting even the most dedicated. Only faith in the Emperor could protect one from Chaos. When Corinthus V lost its

faith, Chaos gained its hold. Now, the Space Wolves had almost reached victory.

Ragnar made a point of trying to remember each campaign before its end, and it was time for the end. The time was right for his Space Wolves to make their final assault. The treacherous enemy, rebels and worshippers of the ruinous powers of Chaos, were all but destroyed. One last strike and this campaign was won.

RAGNAR STOOD ALONE on top of the rocky heights overlooking the city. He enjoyed this time the most. Just before battle, the world seemed different, quiet and tranquil. Moments of quiet were rare in a lifetime of constant warfare. He knew that the moment would not last. His job was not yet done. He caught a familiar scent on the air, and knew it was time.

Powerful strides brought Ranulf, a member of the Wolf Guard, Ragnar's own elite bodyguard, to the top of the hill to stand next to his Wolf Lord. Ranulf was the largest Space Wolf that he had ever known, gifted by the spirit of Leman Russ, primarch of their Chapter, with unparalleled strength. Ragnar thought that if Leman Russ returned to lead the Space Wolves, this Wolf Guard might be able to look the ancient primarch in the eye. More important than his size, Ranulf was one of Ragnar's oldest and dearest friends and the most trusted of his Wolf Guard, holding the title of battle leader, giving him command if the Wolf Lord should fall.

'Are the men assembled?' Ragnar asked.

'Yes, Lord Ragnar, your Wolf Guard awaits you,' Ranulf replied.

Ragnar turned and clapped Ranulf's shoulder. 'As well they should. I'd hate to have them finish the war without me. Ranulf, let's finally be rid of this Chaos filth.'

'What's the current status?' asked Ragnar.

'For the most part, the heretics are scattered and disorganised, but some of them have fortified small strong points within Saint Harman. The Imperial Guard has kept them at bay, but they need us to break the final strongholds.'

‘Good. The Imperial Guard commander remembered my instructions from the beginning of the campaign. He’s saved the last for us to face in the assaults. Starting a war is easy, finishing it is hard. We’ve got the hard part to do. These heretics have one last push in them.’

‘M’lord?’ asked Ranulf.

‘My instincts tell me that they are luring us into a false sense of security. They haven’t fought nearly as hard this time. We haven’t even moved into the combat in Saint Harman. Our Space Wolves had to help the Imperial Guard to even gain a foothold in the other cities. On every other location on this planet, the Chaos worshippers fought tooth and nail, but here in the capital as their last stand, they are routed? I don’t think so. They are in trouble, but a cornered animal is always dangerous. Of course, so are Wolves,’ Ragnar grinned, exposing his long and sharpened canines. The gene-seed, which transformed Space Wolves from men to superhuman warriors, gave them many gifts. Besides their stature, standing half a metre taller than any man, the most outwardly visible sign was their extended canines. The older a Space Wolf was, the longer they grew. For a Wolf Lord, Ragnar was rather short in the tooth, but no one dared mention it to him.

The Wolf Guard stood ready. Three of Ragnar’s finest warriors, Tor, Uller and Hrolf, awaited him. Unlike other packs, Ragnar’s Wolf Guard each carried their own individual arms and weapons. The most experienced and reliable of all of his Space Wolves, they had proven themselves a hundred times over. Now, they would have to prove themselves once more, and each one relished the chance.

‘You’ll break up and go to the packs for this one. Each one of you will lead a pack. Ranulf, I want you and Tor to take Grey Hunter packs near my flanks. Uller, you’ll move your men parallel to Tor. I’ll be with the Blood Claws.’

Ragnar preferred to fight alongside the Blood Claws, the youngest and most restless warriors, newly initiated Space Wolves. They possessed a wild abandon, a raw desire for victory that required strong guidance.

Ragnar unfolded a map. ‘Tor, your pack will flank my right. You will enter the city here and move north towards the Administratum sector. Ranulf you’ll flank my left, on the edge of the merchant sector. We’ll be spread thin, so stay alert.’

Ranulf, Tor and Uller took command of their Grey Hunters, the Space Wolves’ tried and true veterans. Ragnar watched them leave. He had fought alongside all three countless times. However, Ragnar had just granted Tor the honour of joining the Wolf Guard. Ragnar knew he was ready for it. He just wondered if Tor knew it.

‘What would you like me to do, m’lord Ragnar?’ The sarcasm in Hrolf’s voice was so thick that a frostaxe could cut it.

‘Hrolf, I’m sorry I thought you were dead,’ Ragnar stated. The two men shared a long running joke, as Hrolf was by far the oldest member of the great company and Ragnar was the youngest of the Wolf Lords. Despite the difference in rank and age, Hrolf and Ragnar shared a strong bond of brotherhood.

‘Haven’t found the war big enough to kill me yet, Ragnar, and once I do, you’ll have the Iron Priests wire me into the next available Dreadnought, because you hate going to war without me.’ Both men burst into laughter.

One look at Hrolf’s face said everything about the old Space Wolf. It was a map to his past, riddled with scars like landmarks from centuries of war, while his storm-grey eyes reminded Ragnar of the worst hurricanes on their home world of Fenris. Ragnar could see countless horrors and wonders reflected in those eyes. However, his huge smile stood out in contrast to his rough face.

Ragnar threw an arm around his oldest Wolf Guard. ‘Old friend, once again I need you with your Long Fangs. Who else can best handle the heavy support? I’m assuming that you’ve scouted the best place to position your pack?’

‘Aye sir, up on the ridge where you spent the morning admiring Saint Harman, and the ruins of the old spaceport shuttle pad there.’ Hrolf pointed to the south-east ridge, which jutted from the tree canopy, and then to the south-west.

‘Looks perfect, Hrolf, in fact you’re in luck, someone positioned my Long Fangs at both locations.’ Ragnar admired Hrolf’s initiative.

‘Should anything unexpected arise you’ll have enough firepower to shift the balance back in our favour.’

THE SPACE WOLVES moved into the city on foot, making their way first through the burning industrial sector. The air held the scents of blood, decay, smoke and death, along with burning toxins from destroyed machinery. Beneath it all, Ragnar could separate one scent from the others: the sickly sweet taint of Chaos. The enemy was here. The hairs on his neck rose.

The Space Wolves spent the next few hours in silence, communicating through hand gestures and body language. The packs knew each other and each individual covered his battle-brothers. There was no resistance, even though the Imperial Guard had reported fire from several of the buildings that the Space Wolves cleared. Ragnar found access tunnels and entrances to sewer pipes large enough for a man. The enemy was moving. He suppressed a low growl. Stories of Commissar Yarrick’s defeat of the orks on Armageddon came to mind. Surrounded and left for dead, the commissar had rallied a hive to hold out against the ork horde using pipes and tunnels to ambush the greenskins. If the heretics intended to defeat Ragnar that way, they’d learn that he was a wolf, not an ork.

The packs had spread out, seeking resistance. Ragnar worried that they had moved out too far. His Space Wolves had a little of their Wolf Lord in them, and confidence was not something he lacked. He activated his comm.

‘Ranulf, report your position and situation.’

‘We’ve moved along the merchant sector and entered what looks from the ruins to be the workers’ housing area. We’re just to the north of you. Everything is quiet, Wolf Lord... too quiet.’

‘Agreed. Stay cautious and hungry. We’re in a bombed-out intersection on the western edge of the Administratum sector, near the library. If they are going to strike, it will be soon. Pass the word,’ Ragnar replied.

The Administratum sector of Saint Harman was once the heart of the city. Holding elements of the vast bureaucracy meant to enforce

the Emperor's will, the area dictated the ebb and flow of Corinthus V. Reports flowed freely on every aspect of the citizens' life. Like many worlds in the Imperium, freedoms were strictly controlled to protect humanity from outside influences. Administration buildings, mediator precincts, and Imperial chapels were everywhere, all designed in the architectural style of the same structures on Holy Terra, home of the Golden Throne, eternal resting place for the Holy Emperor. They served as a constant reminder that it was from Terra that the Emperor of Mankind launched his holy crusade to reunite humanity in the hopes of protecting them. They hoped to protect them from exactly what had happened on Corinthus V.

Ragnar turned to the Blood Claws around him. The pack was restless. Arik, one of the youngest, kept activating his chainsword, causing the blade to growl like a hungry beast. Ragnar shook his head. 'Steady lads. Keep your senses keen and your minds focused,' he said quietly.

Suddenly, Ragnar heard a crash from inside the ground floor of the Imperial library to the east. It was a tall monolithic building, which put Ragnar in mind of a colossal crypt. Before the war, servitors and aged scholars would have moved quietly through stacks of scrolls, books and datapads within its walls. The tall windows of the library were dark, giving no signs of life, but Ragnar and his pack had definitely heard a crash.

Arik broke into a run, waving his chainsword, and howling his desire for combat. 'There, Wolf Lord, in th—'

Those were the last words that Arik would ever speak. A bolter shell tore through the Blood Claw's head, spreading fragments of his skull in front of his body. To Ragnar's surprise, the shot had come from behind. It was an ambush.

A barrage of fire echoed from behind the pack, and Ragnar felt a bolter shell ricochet off his power armour.

'Ranulf, ambush, we're pinned in crossfire! Hold your ground and be ready for a rapid fire drill.' Ragnar growled in anticipation, feeling more like a Blood Claw than the Wolf Lord he was. 'It should be a full-scale counter-attack.'

Suddenly shards of reinforced rockcrete and ceramite exploded all around the pack. The hot wind of plasma fire vaporised stone and reinforcing steel. The Blood Claws howled, more like wolves than trained Space Marines, circling for a target, looking for someone to attack. 'Find cover,' ordered Ragnar, but the violent explosions drowned his words. The air was rank with smells, so much so that it was hard to isolate and identify them. They were surrounded. Quick glimpses of targets were all they could see, like smoke in a strong wind, almost visible for a second and then gone.

Then Ulrik, Bori and three others stopped. Ragnar knew they had a target, he also knew...

'Ulrik, Bori, stop,' Ragnar shouted. It was too late. They had committed themselves in the direction of the library. He had lost control and his pack was going to charge into that dark vault. Ragnar had no choice. 'In the Emperor's name...' he cursed.

'Charge!' Ragnar howled, drawing his frostblade and charging at the library.

The Blood Claws all heard their leader's command. Charging replaced confusion, as the rest of the pack joined Ragnar, screaming out their battle cries as one, 'For Fenris, for Russ, for the Emperor!'

The Space Wolves unleashed a hailstorm of bolt pistol shots into the library as they charged. Chainswords growled to life, and power weapons flashed with energy, hungry for the blood of their unseen foes. The huge Space Marines raced each other, each one hoping for the first strike.

Before the Blood Claws could reach the enemy the ground rippled and exploded as a missile strike stopped them short, shredding two of their number and sending Ragnar flying. Melta guns lashed out into the pack, instantly incinerating even the Space Marines' ancient power armour. Ragnar watched his own symbol melt away with the arm of one of his Blood Claws, and realised that he and his Wolf brothers were not facing a mere group of Imperial citizens corrupted by the foul powers of Chaos. Their hidden enemies were too well equipped and far too accurate. The Space Wolves were in trouble. Ragnar had only seconds to regain control. He moved through the cover, trying to get a better view. Taking up a

position against a large section of collapsed wall, a cold chill enveloped Ragnar's hearts as he realised who they faced – Chaos Space Marines!

TEN THOUSAND YEARS ago, a terrible civil war nearly destroyed the Imperium. After the fall of the rebels' leader, Horus, the traitors fled into the warp, the nightmare realm beyond space and time. Living in a realm of daemons for ten thousand years, they had honed their skills and fuelled their hatred. Their armour and weapons had changed, fusing with the daemonic energies of Chaos. In all ways, they were better warriors than the Space Wolves, with age-old experience empowered by millennia-old hatred.

Chaos Space Marines lacked only one thing that the Space Wolves possessed: faith in the Emperor. For Ragnar's Space Wolves, they would have to hope that their belief in the Emperor was greater than the Chaos Space Marines' desire for revenge. That was their only advantage.

Ragnar saw one of the Chaos Marines stride forth from the swirling smoke of battle. The giant figure wore glittering dark armour that reflected the light as if it was wet with slime – a Night Lord. A halo of burning fire leapt between the traitor's mutant horns. He swung a black flail that howled like the winter winds of Fenris in one hand, while a skull covered bolter spat death from his other hand.

Ragnar felt the wave of hatred and anger lash out as the servant of Chaos fired his bolter, each shot striking a Space Wolf as if the ancient warrior willed his shells into his victims.

The Wolf Lord raised his gun to return fire, but the Night Lord stepped to the side, avoiding the shots instinctively. For a second, Ragnar thought the smoke of battle poured from the Chaos Marine's armour. If it did, then it served the traitor well. The veil enshrouded him once more. When it cleared a second later, Ragnar's giant enemy had moved. He felt the beast howl in rage within, eager to give chase and destroy his treacherous enemy.

Glancing around, he saw that not all of the buildings held enemies. 'Blood Claws to me,' Ragnar commanded as he leapt and

rolled to the nearest shelter. The former Administratum building had never seen much excitement. Now, it might witness the last stand of a Wolf Lord. Nine Blood Claws joined him. Better numbers than he had expected.

They entered what looked like an office complex. The room spanned the length and depth of the entire building. Large rockcrete columns were spaced evenly throughout. Sections of the walls and floor had been destroyed, and remnants of desks and other furniture were strewn about. At the far end of the room was what looked like an old elevator shaft, filled with debris from the floors above. Next to it was a stairwell. It looked severely damaged, but it was intact.

‘Sons of Russ, follow me. Our destiny awaits!’ Ragnar crossed the room and vaulted up the stairs. They had to reach higher ground and get above the fray. He hoped that whatever spirits held old buildings together they’d keep this one from collapsing.

It was time for Ragnar to stop playing Blood Claw and be the Wolf Lord. He activated his comm.

‘Hrolf, bring your Long Fangs to bear. Target the Imperial library and whatever building nearby has Chaos Havocs shooting from it. We’ve got real enemies.’

‘Havocs? They’re mine. You’ll have new drinking vessels from their helms, if my men leave enough of their horns.’

The stairway shook as explosions rocked the building’s foundations. Ragnar looked behind to check on his pack. Despite his concerns, the Blood Claws kept their balance as they clambered across rubble and broken stairs, moving ever higher. More tremors struck and Ragnar saw a bright orange flash through one of the cracks in the walls. This was what being a Space Wolf was all about, he thought. Ragnar and his Wolves were in their element, outnumbered and outgunned, but not outmatched. It was good to be a Wolf Lord.

Ragnar’s comm crackled into life. ‘Wolf Lord, this is Tor. I’m not going to let the enemy assassinate you. You have the only action, centred around the Imperial library. My Grey Hunters have not met resistance. I’m bringing my pack and having the others coordinate as well. Just give me the word.’

Ragnar didn't like this. He responded, 'Tor, hold your position,' but his only reply was a high-pitched buzz. They were being jammed. It wasn't a trap for Ragnar, he was the bait, and loyal Tor was about to put his foot in it.

Ragnar reached a reinforced metal door, sealing off the roof. Despite the seal, he could smell the stench of Chaos on the other side, a sickly odour somewhere between sulphur and rotting meat. This building wasn't abandoned. The enemy were waiting on the other side of the door, ready to cut Ragnar and his Blood Claws to ribbons the minute it opened. They had set another trap for him. If they smashed the door, they'd step out into a firing squad. Fortunately, the pack wasn't going through the door. Ragnar hoped that a Havoc squad held this roof, just to get them before Hrolf did.

Ragnar gestured to his Blood Claws. They had the scent as well. Stepping away from the door, Ragnar turned towards the right wall. Made of solid rockcrete, it still appeared less reinforced than the metal door. Years of experience had taught Ragnar that engineers often made their doors stronger than their walls. He took a couple of steps back from the wall, signalled and readied his Blood Claws. Lunging forwards into the wall, the force of Ragnar's impact reduced the rockcrete to micro-particles. Ragnar and his Space Wolves poured through the opening to find nothing. All that remained was the scent of the Chaos taint. The Chaos Marines had passed this way, but they weren't here any longer. Like spiders, they had lurked on the rooftops, and then lowered themselves down into positions near the library square for the ambush. Ragnar chided himself for a moment, but he knew that he couldn't take chances against these foes.

TOR AND HIS GREY Hunters closed the distance to the Imperial library. There had been no response from Wolf Lord Ragnar, so it was up to him as a Wolf Guard to make a decision. He needed to protect Ragnar. If the Wolf Lord was all right, he would have responded, and if something had happened to Ragnar, Tor would make sure that the heretics got to see their Chaos masters when they went screaming to hell.

The pack of Space Wolves came to a large pile of debris, where the upper floors of an unrecognisable building had come to rest at its foundations. The ruins provided a strong defensible position for Tor to get his bearings and formulate a strategy.

‘Tor, are you sure about this?’ asked the voice of Uller, one of the other Wolf Guard over the comm.

‘I have no response from Ragnar. We need to get as many Space Wolves to his side as we can, right now! It’s my decision,’ answered Tor. ‘Bring as many of the others as possible, and keep moving.’

‘Tor, this is Ranulf. My last orders were to hold and stand ready for attack.’

‘Ranulf, you’re too far away to help. You should hold, but the rest of us need to be there.’

‘You should wait for Lord Ragnar.’

‘He may not have time.’ Tor clicked off his comm.

Tor led his men out of cover and ran fast through the empty streets. Tall office buildings loomed all around them. Each one could contain dozens of enemies. The Grey Hunters were the only living things running through a deserted rockcrete canyon. The dark empty streets could become a kill zone at any second. For Tor, caution was no longer a concern. The pack would save their Wolf Lord, or their spirits would go back to Fenris covered in glory. They reached the library square, coming beneath the long shadow of the vaulted Imperial library. Across the square, Tor spied Uller’s Grey Hunters hugging the edge of an Administratum building. The air was quiet. Tor scanned the rubble, catching glimpses of blue-grey ceramite, fragments of Space Wolf power armour, scattered among the debris. He moved his Grey Hunters forwards.

Night Lords burst from hiding places behind the Grey Hunters, leaving the Space Wolves pinned against the cover. Space Wolves were known across the galaxy for their superior senses, a fact the Chaos Marines were obviously aware of. Establishing their point of ambush down wind, they had been able to hide their presence from the Space Wolves.

Unlike Tor, the traitors did not hesitate. They fired their weapons with brutal accuracy. Nearly every shot found the armour of a Space

Wolf. Tor caught a glimpse of the skulls and bones hanging as trophies from their belts, along with the heads of Imperial Guardsmen and even a Space Wolf helm. The young Wolf Guard looked to Uller's men, hoping for support. He saw three of Uller's Grey Hunters drop to their knees as blood poured from their armour. The Night Lords had got in behind Uller's pack as well.

Tor realised his mistake. The enemy had used the Wolf Lord as bait, and not only had Tor led his own pack into the deathtrap, he had led the others as well. Mere moments before, he had seen the square as the perfect cover to approach the large grey doors of the Imperial library. Now, it was a maze of debris, trapping his men. The Night Lords had closed off their exit routes and left them pinned. They were surrounded and outnumbered. They were going to die.

He tried the comm but it was jammed.

Bolter rounds came from all sides, but unlike normal bolter shells, these shrieked and exploded with burning flames. Inhuman laughter echoed across the library square as if the buildings themselves mocked the dying Space Wolves. A dark-armoured Chaos Marine stood up in the middle of the debris, less than three metres from Tor. With a war cry akin to the howl of a banshee, he raised a writhing metal gun, and fired a burst of blue-white plasma, not at Tor, but at a cluster of Grey Hunters, engulfing two, and leaving them melted piles of flesh and ceramite. An incendiary ignited within the debris all around the Grey Hunters. Even if the Space Wolves had found cover in the plaza, they were in danger of roasting alive.

There was only one chance. Tor's Space Wolves had to assault the enemy and break out. He yelled at Uller, while his men fell around him. 'We've got to charge.'

Uller nodded, although Tor could see the glare in his eyes. Uller blamed Tor for this disaster, and rightly so.

'For Russ!' howled Tor as he charged the Chaos forces. The Space Wolves had to break free and regroup. The inhuman laughter grew louder. The enemy wanted the packs to come closer. The Night Lords never hesitated in firing. A Grey Hunter twisted to the ground

as a bolter round tore through his armour and his intestines. Tor felt the bolter rounds crunch on his armour, each a hammer-blow. He prayed to the Emperor that his armour would hold, even as he watched the Chaos Marines draw their spiked and rune-covered weapons, continuing to fire their bolters one-handed.

Tor swung his axe at a Night Lord, who hissed like a serpent. The Chaos Marine parried with a tendril coiled around the hilt of a chainsword, sending blue sparks flying from the frostaxe as the blade's teeth shattered one by one. The traitor's bolter slammed a round into Tor's chest plate.

Tor gritted his teeth and fired his plasma pistol, all the while trying to keep his eyes off the enemy's armour.

The plasma enveloped the chest plate of the Night Lord, burning its way through the ancient ceramite. The intense heat melted everything it came in contact with including the chest of the Marine encased within. Liquid remains oozed out of the opening as he collapsed to the ground.

There was no time to celebrate the death of his enemy. A black-clad giant, its armour covered in writhing green runes, drove a spiked blade into the joint of Tor's armour above the thigh. The Wolf Guard felt the end of the blade twist back and forth inside him as if it was alive. Another Night Lord, with horns twisting out through his armour like weeds through broken rockcrete, delivered a hard blow with a double-bladed axe, cracking Tor's helm.

'Tooorrr,' cried out one of the Grey Hunters as he dived to protect his Wolf Guard. A third Chaos Marine moved to intercept with preternatural speed, catching the Grey Hunter on a chainaxe in mid-air. The Grey Hunter's heroic dive proved his undoing, as the chainaxe carved through him, splattering Tor with his comrade's blood and insides. The Night Lord raised his chainaxe in triumph and inhuman laughter echoed round the square.

RAGNAR COULD SEE everything from the roof's edge. Chaos Space Marines surrounded his packs of Grey Hunters. Ragnar's insides curled in knots. He could make out Tor and Uller. Tor was on the ground, but still struggling. Uller swung his large power fist around

in a deadly arc, heroically keeping three Night Lords at bay as he tried to force his way to Tor. A Grey Hunter sliced off the arm of a Chaos Marine, yet his inhuman foe didn't falter, redoubling his attacks with his remaining arm and thrusting a burning crimson power sword through the Space Wolf's chest. One Night Lord tore the helmet off another Grey Hunter, and spat acid across the Fenrisian's face. The Night Lords were more than a match for the Space Wolves, and they had the advantage of terrain and numbers. The enemy was toying with the Space Wolves, enjoying the slaughter of the Emperor's finest.

Ragnar wanted to leap down into the fray. The fall would kill any normal man, but he knew he could survive. However, it would only drop him into the trap. Even he wouldn't last long in the middle of the melee. He had to come from the side, from somewhere unexpected.

He spotted a neighbouring building that was leaning threateningly towards the one they stood on. Weeks of fighting had damaged it badly but somehow it hadn't completely fallen. However, it was close enough to their building to give Ragnar and his men a way out. 'Follow me,' he ordered then backed up and ran as fast as he could, leaping at the last moment. He flew across the chasm between the buildings, and for a moment, he wondered if Logan Grimnar, the Old Wolf and greatest of the Wolf Lords, would have tried this. He crashed into the roof of the other building, smashing through the rockcrete. He had made it, and his power armour had kept him going. The other Blood Claws landed around him, like a volley of missiles. 'Let's move,' Ragnar snarled.

They raced through the oddly angled building, running, crawling, and even jumping at times to reach the far side. If Ragnar needed evidence of Chaos infestation here in Saint Harman, he had found it. The facades of the buildings looked normal, but the insides held architectural madness. The builders had fallen away from Imperial standards and walked the edge of sanity. Corners jutted out into hallways, and strange rounded floors bulged upwards. Discoloured ceiling tiles seemed to form alien glyphs, and the height

of the ceiling changed, sometimes reaching over three metres and other times forcing them to crouch.

Ragnar hoped that by travelling through the building his pack had crossed the Chaos lines. Now was the time to find out. There was no time for stairs. Ragnar tore his way out of the building through the wall and dropped, reaching out against the side of the building to slow his fall. He landed heavily in a shower of debris, followed by his loyal Blood Claws. They showed no hesitation. Power armour and myomer muscle had absorbed the impact, micro-servos contracting and releasing, transferring the energy of the landing. Ragnar's gambit had worked.

Ragnar leapt to his feet and broke into a run. He knew where Tor was trying his breakout, and knew they had little time. The sounds of warfare clearly guided them to the assault.

'This is Ragnar, if you aren't near the library, hold your positions and brace for possible attack,' he growled over the comm.

'Hold here,' he ordered the Blood Claws, raising a fist in the air and pointing to a ruined building that looked as if it might provide decent cover. 'Ulrik, take the four other Blood Claws with you, move through that building and take up firing positions on the other side. Wait for my command before you act. Is that clear?'

'Yes, Wolf Lord,' Ulrik replied. The Blood Claw showed signs of control. Perhaps he was on his way to being a Grey Hunter.

'The rest of you, come with me.' Ragnar waved them forwards.

Ragnar manoeuvred closer through the debris and rubble, keeping cover. He could see Chaos Space Marines surrounding Tor and his remaining Grey Hunters. The Night Lords were firing into the fray without regard for their own, killing Space Wolf and Chaos Marine alike. One of the Night Lords clutched a standard bearing the icon of their wretched god of Chaos, a mystical item not uncommon to their ilk. Laughter echoed from below, centring on the icon itself. The essences of daemons were often bound to such standards, allowing horrors from the warp to manifest and claim victims for the Dark Powers. However depraved the enemy's attacks seemed so far, daemons would do worse. As Ragnar watched, a ghostly green mist formed around the icon bearer. His heart pounded

in his chest, the enemy was about to summon their daemonic allies. He had to destroy that icon.

‘When I break cover shoot everything you have into the traitors.’

Ragnar tried his comm again, only to receive an earful of high pitched static. He’d have to do it on his own. He hurled himself over the wall and sprinted towards the cultists. Behind him, the Blood Claws unleashed the wrath of Fenris with their bolt pistols. Ragnar heard Ulrik’s force following their lead. The traitors turned their attention away from the Grey Hunters, searching for their new attackers.

Ragnar crashed into the melee, snapping the neck of a Night Lord by twisting its horned helm. Bile, ichor and goo shot forth instead of the flesh and bone of a man.

The suddenness of the Wolf Lord’s attack threw the Chaos Space Marines into confusion. Ragnar put his blade through the twisted faceplate of another traitor. Their enemies had let themselves become overconfident.

A gigantic Chaos Marine, nearly the size of Ranulf, threw Tor to the ground, and stood over him, gloating and carving through the Imperial eagle on his armour, trying to reach his heart. Ragnar could hear him speaking a strange chant as he prepared to sacrifice the Wolf Guard to the gods of Chaos. The traitor’s depravity was his undoing, as Ragnar shot him point blank, never giving him a chance. Only Tor and two Grey Hunters were left alive, and one of the Space Marines was too wounded to fight on. Without hesitation, Ragnar hoisted the wounded Space Wolf over his shoulder and ran back towards the ruins where his Blood Claws continued firing. A bolter shell crashed into Ragnar’s backpack. The attack had startled the Chaos Marines, but they recovered quickly. ‘Don’t stop,’ he shouted.

Behind Ragnar, the world exploded in a bright fireball. Then, a second blast erupted, and a third. The Night Lord holding the icon fell as a lascannon shot instantly vaporised him. The greenish mist dissolved with a high-pitched wail, and the laughter was cut short.

‘Wolf Lord, didn’t you promise me some Havocs?’ came Hrolf’s voice from the comm.

Thank Russ for that grizzled old warrior. The Long Fangs were giving them cover fire. They would escape.

The rest was a blur of smoke, debris and confusion as the Long Fangs pounded the Chaos position. A few more Grey Hunters found their way out of the trap, but they were too few, far too few.

WITHIN THE HOUR, Ragnar stood at the clamshell hatch of his Land Raider Crusader. He had established a command outpost just below the ridge in the industrial section of Saint Harman, where his men had entered the city hours before. The Chaos forces had forced the Space Wolves to withdraw and regroup. Fortunately the casualties were not as heavy as they could have been. Heaviest hit was his Blood Claws pack, and Tor and Uller's Grey Hunters.

Ragnar had no time for thoughts of remorse. His battle-brothers had met a worthy end in the service of Russ. He had to focus on how the enemy forces had reinforced on such a level. He had underestimated them.

Ranulf ran up to the Crusader, just ahead of two Space Wolf scouts. 'The scouts have returned, Lord Ragnar. They bring news.'

Scouts of the Space Wolf Chapter were an odd sort, shunning the standard organisational doctrine of the Space Wolves, serving Russ in a more solitary and isolated way. Like the Priests of Iron, the Great Wolf himself controlled them, dispatching and deploying them wherever he saw a need. In fact, it was the Wolf scouts who had identified the first signs of Chaos on Corinthus V. Ragnar was aware of their presence and had been receiving intelligence from them.

Two grizzled Wolf scouts walked up slowly, as if they were saving their energy for combat. The taller of the two looked to be several centuries old. Wolf pelts hung around his waist and over his right shoulder. He wore wolf teeth, more than could be counted, on a leather cord around his neck. His face was weathered, a scar running across it, starting just above his left eye and spreading down across his nose and through his lip, ending on his right lower jaw. The wound was so deep that when it had healed it had separated his lip, exposing his canines, making him appear to be constantly snarling.

He was armed with a bolter, but there was nothing simple about the ice-blue edge of the axe that was strapped across his back. Ragnar knew his name was Hoskuld.

The second scout seemed more subdued, wearing a hooded wolf pelt that almost completely enveloped him. The hood hid his face so that Ragnar could only see the glow of a bionic eye. Across his back, he carried a sniper rifle.

Ragnar nodded to them both.

‘Hoskuld, it is good to see you again. What have you discovered?’ he asked.

‘M’lord, as instructed we made our way deep into the city. It is as you feared. The traitors have significantly reinforced their numbers,’ the scout reported. ‘The enemy has a sorcerer who opened a portal to bring reinforcements through. We overheard them talking—’

‘You overheard them talking?’ Ranulf interrupted. ‘Just how close were you?’

‘Close enough to hear them talking,’ replied Hoskuld, dryly.

‘Ranulf!’ Ragnar held a hand up to silence his battlebrother. ‘Please continue.’

‘They are too few to open a portal big enough to bring anything very large through, but they did say that by tomorrow night they would be strong enough to open a larger gate,’ the scout concluded.

‘We have to go in tonight, Ranulf,’ said Ragnar.

Ragnar turned back to the scouts. ‘Could you lead a small force back to the position where you witnessed this ritual?’

‘A small force, yes m’lord,’ the scout replied.

‘Good. Ranulf, gather the Wolf Guard, and find Tor. I will need him for this.’

‘M’lord, are you certain that you want Tor?’ Ranulf inquired.

‘He’s going to lead the force,’ stated Ragnar.

‘Lead it?’ Ranulf growled with surprise.

‘Yes Ranulf, Tor will lead the incursion force to destroy the portal. We will launch our own attack to distract them.’

‘But m’lord, Tor—’

‘Needs an opportunity to redeem himself, Ranulf. Redemption requires two things, desire and opportunity. I know this better than most. Tor will get his chance for redemption.’

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