



THE HELWINTER GATE  
**HRANI'S SAGA**

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**CHRIS WRAIGHT**

## PREAMBLE

*My lord,*

*Herewith the document you requested. This is the original manuscript, held in a secure stasis-facility, cleared for onward transmission by the master of the scriptorium on Marmio.*

*You will wish to make your own judgement on its contents. Note that the text has been extensively commented on already. Whether this commentary amounts to defacement or helpful explanatory material, I do not presume to judge. The identity of the author of the marginalia is unknown.*

*Some comments on the document's provenance. We estimate composition some forty years (standard: Terran) after the events described. It was not written on Fenris (no documents, to my knowledge, have ever been recovered from that world), and is a translation from another source. Despite the stilted prose — a result of the translation — it bears the marks of an author well versed in the ways of the Wolves of Fenris. A refugee, perhaps. Or, more likely, someone capable of transcribing an oral account onto vellum, in contemporary Gothic of an academic kind.*

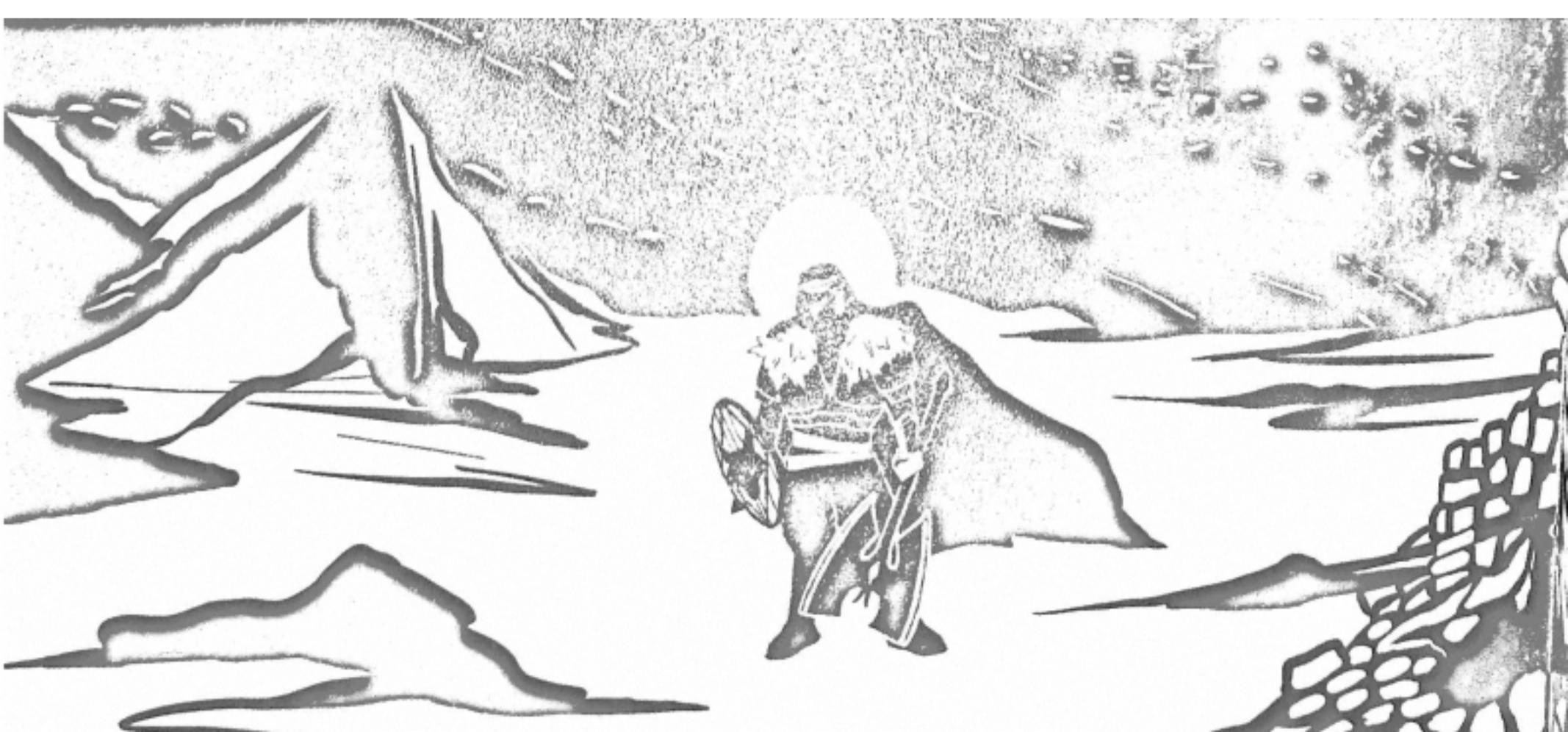
*The parchment was recovered from His Ship Munificent, thence transmitted to the archives here, where it remained for, we guess, around twenty years (s:T). It has been studied infrequently during that time. Now it has been sent to you.*

*I trust it proves of interest.*

*In His Name,*

*Drabo*

*(Curator, Gradus Secundus, Marmio Imperial Archives)*



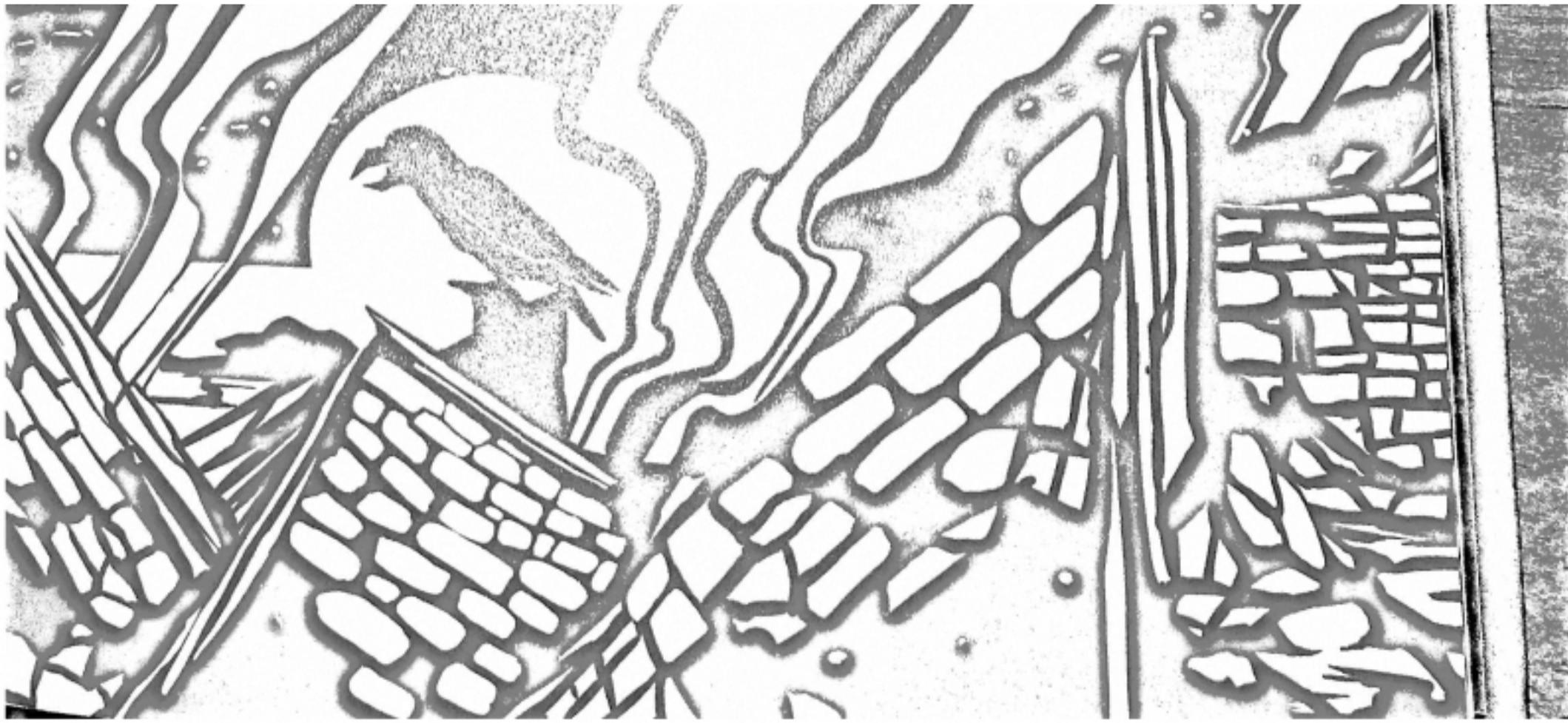
# I. OF FENRYS AND ITS DEVASTATION

This tale speaks of Hrani, called Fire-axe, warrior of Raegrec's pack, who came from the ice, was brought to the Mountain, and fought well in many battles before his thread was cut. He met his end at the Helwinter Gate, along with many both greater and lesser than he. He was not the wisest, nor the strongest, nor the most wrathful, but he wielded an axe as a true son of Asaheim, and now he feasts with Russ in the Halls of Fire.<sup>1</sup>

Hrani was sailing the sea of stars, far-ranging, seeking glory and renown with his jarl, the Young King of the Blackmanes.<sup>2</sup> So it was that he was distant when treachery was done, when the one-eyed witch-lord came out of the starlit darkness. None of Hrani's war-pack were on the Mountain's heights when the traitors came. None of them were roused for battle when Midgardia was cast into the fires. None of them fought in the shieldwalls against the spell-spoiled foe.

*1. It has been remarked upon many times that the Adeptus Astartes Chapter known as the Wolves of Fenris deviates markedly from the Holy Codex Astartes. The term 'warrior', here, is vague. It is known from other historical sources that Raegrec was the sergeant-equivalent of a 'Grey Hunters' squad, making Hrani most likely an experienced Tactical Marine, in the pre-Rift classification.*

*2. The Young King's name is known to the annals: Ragnar Blackmane, captain of the Chapter's Tenth Company. The identity of the 'one-eyed witch-lord' is uncertain, and no research has been permitted into it. We may surmise that he was some fell commander of a corrupted army, an enemy whom the Wolves seem to loathe more than all others.*





*3. The truth of this claim is impossible to verify. According to much-redacted records shared by scholiasts of the Adeptus Mechanicus, the death world of Fenris is still listed as the recruiting centre for the Chapter, so if some great calamity did indeed occur there, the population may since have recovered.*

Much has been written of that time of lamentation. The skjalds sung of it, declaiming their sorrow and anger in many sagas. The ice was turned to water, the scarce land was burned black. Faithless was the enemy, vile were his consorts. Though mighty warriors rose up to defend the halls of Russ, their threads were cut, and only scarcely did the primarch's sons prevent the witch-lord from entering the Mountain itself. Ice-shrouded Fenrys was made a wasteland, its people were scattered, its fastnesses laid low.<sup>3</sup>

## II. OF THE COMPANIES AND THEIR GATHERING

In that time, High King Logan Grimnar summoned all those jarls who remained. With him in the ruins were Harald Witch-Hater, Sven Bloody-Howl, and wild Krom. Egil, famed lord of iron-craft, lay dead on the ice, and his place was taken by his huscarl, named Orven Highfell. Hastening to the High King's side across the black void came Bjorn, called son of the storm, ruddy both of face and axe-blade. With him was Bran, called Red-Maw, the long-limbed hunter, and Engir, master of the star-sea. Close behind were grim-eyed Erik Morkai, Gunnar Red-Moon, and Kjarl, seer of flame-ringed futures.

Last of all came the Young King to that gathering, and fearsome was his anger when he looked across the burned peaks. Spears were shivered, shields were beaten. A hundred oaths were sworn across the cracked Annulus Chamber within the Mountain. Weregild was demanded, vengeance promised.

‘All worlds shall suffer this fate,’ said the High King, ‘if we do not take war to the powers who begun it.’



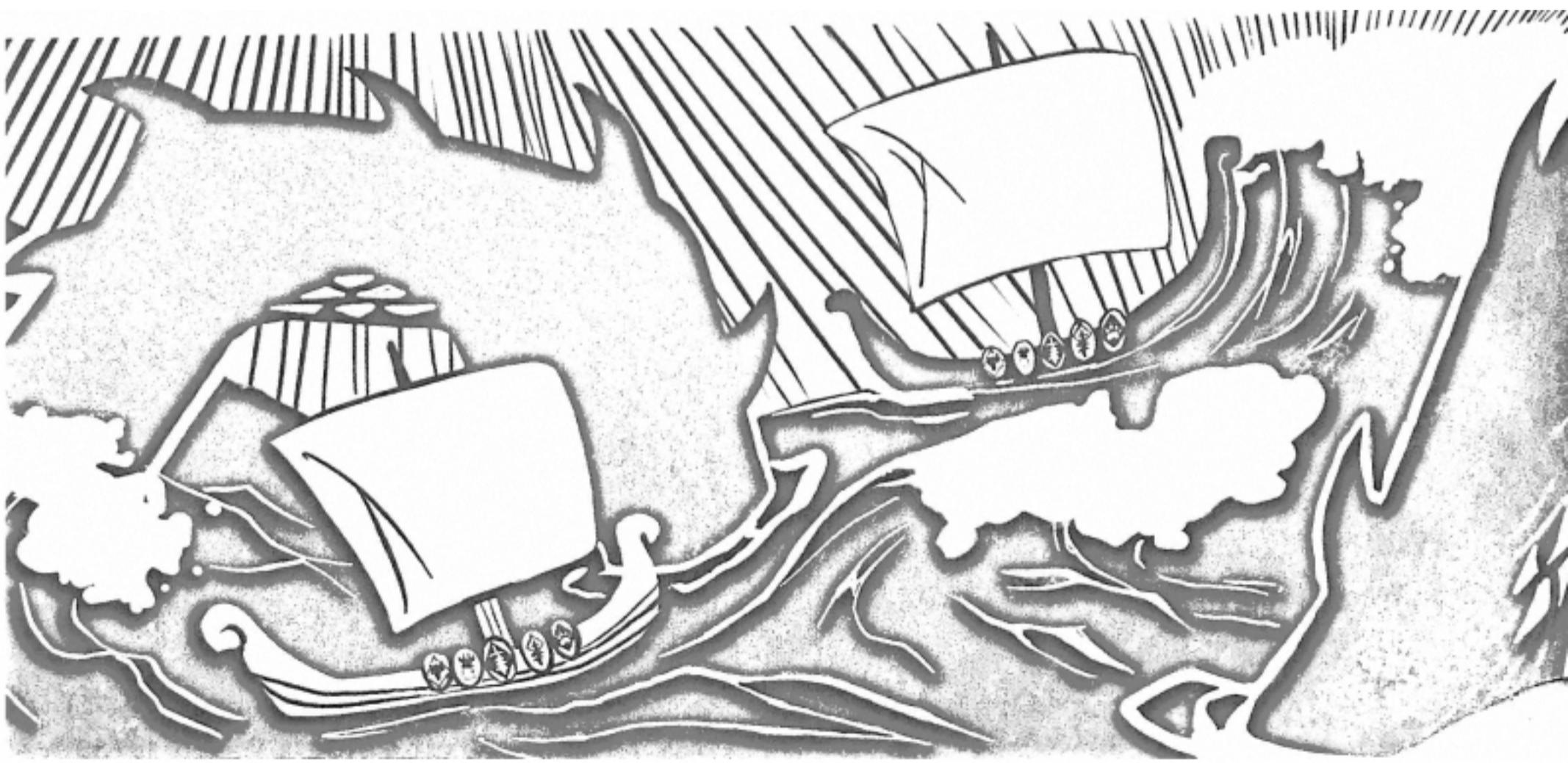


4. Translation of this phrase is uncertain, possibly also rendered as the *Gate of Endless Storms*, or the *Doorway to Unceasing Destruction*. Later material makes it clear that the term refers to the Cadian System, as well as the stable warp routes this principal world once guarded on the borders of the *Ocularis Terribus*.

‘And yet, how can we fight the gods in their own realm,’ said Gunnar Red-Moon. ‘What ships would carry us there?’

Then Njal Caller-of-Storms, master of the runes, spoke. ‘They shall come to us. I foresee the Helwinter Gate<sup>4</sup> opening, the bridge between worlds breaking. Journey with haste, and we may yet join our blades with the makers of this great wrong.’

Then the High King ruled, and thrice-cursed the names of those who had come to Fenrys with lies on their tongues and poison on their sword-edges, and gave the order to gather what ships remained, and make for the sea of stars. And all his jarls acclaimed him, and the War-Wolves of Fenrys took up their axes and rode again to battle.



### III.

## OF THE SAILING OF THE DRAGONSHIPS TO THE HELWINTER GATE

In those days, the great gulf was in turmoil, and fell beasts swam among the black waves, devouring ships both great and small. And so Njal crafted prows for the warships in the form of iron dragons, their eyes burning with the pure fire of the High King's wrath. And under that protection, the dragonships carved a path through the tumult, guided by Caller-of-Storms and his priests.<sup>5</sup>

First to leave was *Gylfarheim*, greatest of ships, proud vessel of the High King himself. Many more followed, twelve times twelve in number, each one a world-slayer in heft, each one crewed by a champion of the ice-world.<sup>6</sup> When the dragonships took to the tide-runs, their fires were as the summer-glare of suns.

*5. This seems unlikely. The warrior here named Njal — the Chief Librarian of the Chapter — would have had neither the time nor the capacity, based on our calculations, to modify a significant void-capable fleet in such a manner. And, even if he had, it is doubtful that such figureheads would have given much protection against the Category Nine warp storms reported as being in process during the 13th Black Crusade. It may instead be a euphemism for some restricted technology used by the Chapter's Techmarines, or merely the embellishments of the author.*





6. Again, this cannot be right. A 'world-slayer' vessel corresponds to a Chapter capital ship - i.e. a Codex-compliant battle-barge or strike cruiser. The Wolves of Fenris were recorded as having under forty such vessels prior to their campaigns at the end of the 41st millennium, and many of those must have been destroyed or taken during the Armageddon and Fenris conflicts. The scholar Arume Lyu has suggested that the Chapter possessed fewer than twenty such ships at the time of the Cadian campaign, together with a similar complement of Hunter, Gladius and Nova-class warships. One hundred and forty-four must be, by any stretch of the imagination, a major exaggeration.

7. Precise meaning unclear. Most likely First Company veterans of some sort.

8. Text corrupt.

The Young King took ship with his brother-jarls. With him, sailing under the gaze of iron dragons, went his vaerangi<sup>7</sup>, closest of brothers, sworn to defend the jarl against all foes. Olvec the Wise was mightiest of these. With him stood Tor Wolfheart, and Alrydd the Tale-Teller, and Uller Greylock, Hrolf Longspear and Svengril Not-so-Old. Unworned by their far-ranging into the wilds of the void, they laughed heartily as the storms blew across the ships' prows, thirsting swiftly for battle.

Raegrec took ship too, one of many mighty warriors, yearning to prove his worth and bring honour to his pack. It was under this battle-leader that Hrani went to war, and they had slain many enemies together over the long years.

'Come then, brothers!' Raegrec said. 'None of this pack shall shame the Rout by being slowest into battle. Sharpen sword-edges, fasten helms. We shall test one another even as the ship sails.'

And so the pack-brothers fought, one by one, and Hrani was the victor. 'Soon now, let there be real enemies!' he said. 'One to test a killer's mettle, unlike Skovgar here, whose fat is full of sk—<sup>8</sup>

And so the many packs traversed the sea of stars, and the beasts of the deep reached out claws to drag them under, but none were taken that day, so fierce was the warriors' longing to reach the place appointed by fate for battle.

## IV

### OF THE OPENING OF THE GATE

Now, it is said that the Helwinter Gate was the greatest fortress of any raised, save those of the Hearthworld itself and the much-envied fastness of the Fang. Its walls were the height of mountains, and atop its ramparts stood fighters from all the many realms of humankind. Those brave fighters, seasoned in warfare and steadfast in temperament, looked up at the sides, and saw the realm of the gods open up before them, and their spirits quailed.

Fell creatures came out of the sky-wound. Great ships came with them, bearing ancient warriors from forgotten realms. They rampaged across that entire world, wishing to make it an empty waste as they had done on Fenrys. They had no pity, and did not spare any living soul from their depredations. Before long, all were fighting for their lives.

No words that the skjalds know are foul enough to describe the monstrous creatures that came out of the Gate on that day. They were broken beasts, suckled on hot blood and fed on still-living flesh. Many-eyed and many-limbed, cloaked in magicks and unclean sorcery, they made stout-hearted warriors flee the battlefield, leaving the walls





9. This account is inconsistent with the historical records retrieved from the depositories on Coronis Agathon and elsewhere. No trustworthy sources attest to widespread Cadian retreat before the arrival of the Space Wolves Chapter. Indeed, it seems clear that the command structures established by Lord Castellan Creed remained pre-eminent even after the arrival of these and other Adeptus Astartes contingents. We may assume that this is another typical piece of exaggeration by the scribe, though it may indicate the severity of the situation on-world by the time Chapter Master Grimnar's forces were able to make planetfall.

unguarded and the hearths untended. Some were like serpents, and others like birds, and yet others like rotting corpses. Into these battles came the Wolves of Russ, eager for the bloodletting, undaunted by any monsters of the void, for they had slain such beasts since the first of days.<sup>9</sup>

The ships of Fenrys spat flame and fury at the enemy, sending many hulls falling to the earth in ruins. And yet Hrani was ill-humoured, and raged at his battle leader.

‘We did not come to this place to let our lackeys exchange spear-throws,’ he said, his blood hot. ‘Let us find some solid earth to stand upon, enough to swing an axe.’

And so the war-pack of Raegrec made for the world below, and their coming was as sudden sunlight onto stone-hard frost. Raegrec was first, followed by Hrani, then Alvec, Sven Blunt-Edge, Tyr Blackbrow, Gunnar, Ori and Rostar the Reckless. They brandished their blades, laughing at all foes, and smote them wherever they stood. The war-words of Fenrys were heard on that world, and all enemies quailed to hear them. Many misfortunes had befallen that place, but no strife could compare to the wrath of the Sons of Russ.



V.  
**OF THE BATTLE  
OF THE GIANTS**

For forty days and forty nights, the war-band of Raegrec slew and conquered, neither resting nor pausing for sustenance. Many were the threads they ended, and numberless the mighty champions they laid low.

And yet, not all the servants of the Dark Gods were of mortal shape. Some walked in the manner of beasts, or were clad in shape-shifting magicks. Others were greater in stature even than watchtowers, and made the earth shake as they hastened to war. These giants had wings like those of a bat, and brazen flesh, and carried whips of flame that carved rocks apart.<sup>10</sup>

Many war-packs hurried to meet these beasts in battle. Banners were hoisted and swords unsheathed together, until the battlefield was thronged with warriors of the ice. Slaughter was done across those plains, and blood itself fell from the skies. There fell Alvec, famed warrior of Raegrec's pack, as well as Ori and Sven Blunt-Edge. It seemed as if the day should be lost when Raegrec himself was killed, his thread ended by the claws of giants.

*10. Once again, these descriptions appear fanciful. It may be that certain enemy troops wore armour decorated with wings, or carried flame-weapons of some kind. Self-evidently, the proportions are implausible. The only other records of creatures matching the text here appear in proscribed manuscripts from known heretics, and so may be discounted.*





11. *A Librarian of the Chapter.*

12. *Some other accounts taken from Cadia support this phenomenon. The Sage-Cleric of Talask records many instances of relic blades spontaneously burning when exposed to enemy formations. He ascribed such episodes to Acts of the Emperor Himself and the Church sanctioned this explanation in its official injunctions. By contrast, the scholar Alia de Nauv suggested malfunctions in disruptor units as being the likely source of the legend. It has proved hard to locate details of her proofs, however, and she herself has not been traceable since publishing her initial critique of Ecclesiarchy doctrine.*

Only the power of the gothi<sup>11</sup> prevented the death of all fighters on that day. Those powerful seers wound the skeins of fate, and held back the sorcery of the enemy. So it was that the hunters were able to avenge the loss of their master. Hrani was fastest, and thrust his axe into the face of the greatest of beasts. As he did so, the foul monster breathed its fire across him, and his axe-blade was set alight. Scorning the pain, Hrani slew the creature with a single blow, and it dropped to the earth like a tree felled.

Then Hrani made to cast his axe aside, as the flames continued to burn, and he feared that it had been hexed with some great curse. Only the gothi prevented him. One of them, called Eir Crow, said, ‘The flame is pure, marking your deed. Bear the blade openly, and use it to smite the enemies of your kin.’

And so Hrani got his name, and kept the axe at his side. When locked at his belt, it slumbered. But when pulled free in the presence of the enemy, its flames returned, and few could stand against its heat and fury.<sup>12</sup>

## VI. OF THE BATTLE WITH THE SERPENT

With every hour, more vile creatures came through the Helwinter Gate, defiling the sacred earth and staining the pure airs. The defenders became weary as the days of slaughter went on, and even the blades of the Wolves felt heavy in their hands.

Greatest of all the faithless invaders was the Serpent, the holder of the keys of the Underverse, the master of an ancient daemon-sword. He had many names, and all were feared and loathed across a thousand worlds. Some named him First of Traitors, others called him Bastard of Horus. Still more knew him as the Despoiler, the bringer of measureless ruin. When this Serpent came at last to the Gate, the last hope fled, and mortals fell on their faces as the skies turned black.<sup>13</sup>

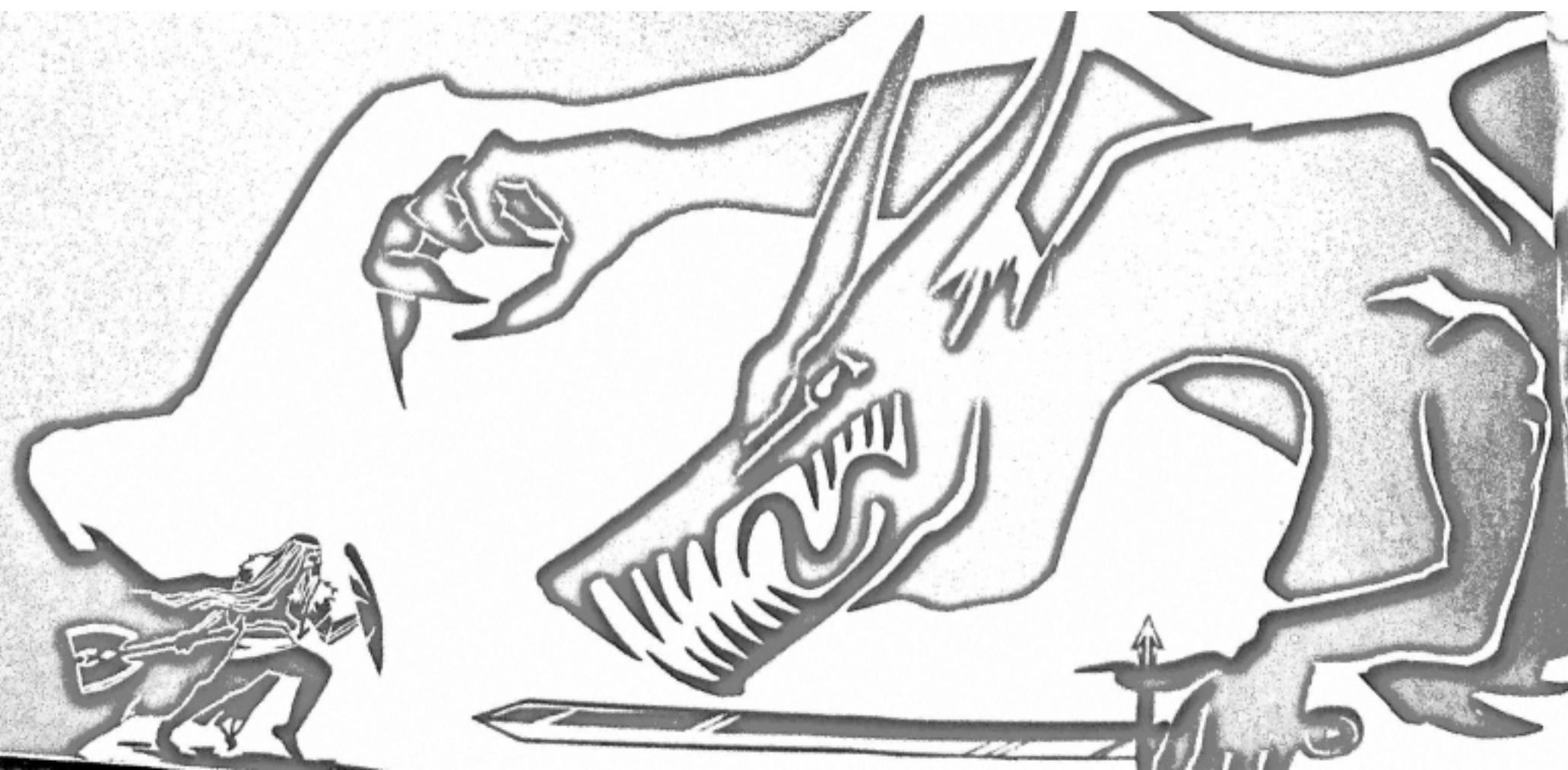
Now Hrani was the master of the pack. All of those hunters were bloodied by fighting, their helms cracked and their axes blunted. Hrani spoke to them, saying, ‘The greatest test has come. No honour would we have, if we did not face this foe and bring him low. Who will come with me, and place his axe on this traitor’s neck?’

*13. This is a clear reference to the notorious warlord known as Abaddon, though little more can be said to add to the vague descriptions here. His existence has never been confirmed in official Adeptus Terra missives, despite frequent references in unsanctioned literature. If he was indeed present during the battle for Cadia, then that would be consistent with other reported sightings both before and after, though these too are subject to much doubt. The only certainty is that the force raised against the Cadian Gate was truly formidable, involving some of the greatest figure-heads of the Archenemy, most of whose true names are unknown to all save, perhaps, the High Lords themselves.*

14. It is possible that this site is Kasr Kraf, a battlefield mentioned in many other chronicles. According to some accounts, this was the locus of fighting in the battle's final stages. Or it may be that the author has merged different episodes into one. There is no way, of course, to be sure.

And despite all that had befallen them, and all their injuries, none gainsaid their pack-leader, but all raised their blades together and swore to cut the thread of the Great Serpent and take his head back to the ice-world as a trophy of battle. So they ran, as swift as the gales over Asaheim, to where the faithless one had made his landing. So furious was their race that none stood against them, and they passed in a storm of wrath towards the enemy's camp.

But the Serpent had not come alone. Fell captains came with him, ancient champions of foul gods, wreathed in dire magicks. They laid waste to fortress after fortress, levelling walls that had each stood for a thousand years. A single one of those warriors would have been enough to turn the tide of battle on another world, and yet there were hundreds gathered there, a tide of darkness that hid the land and sky from sight.

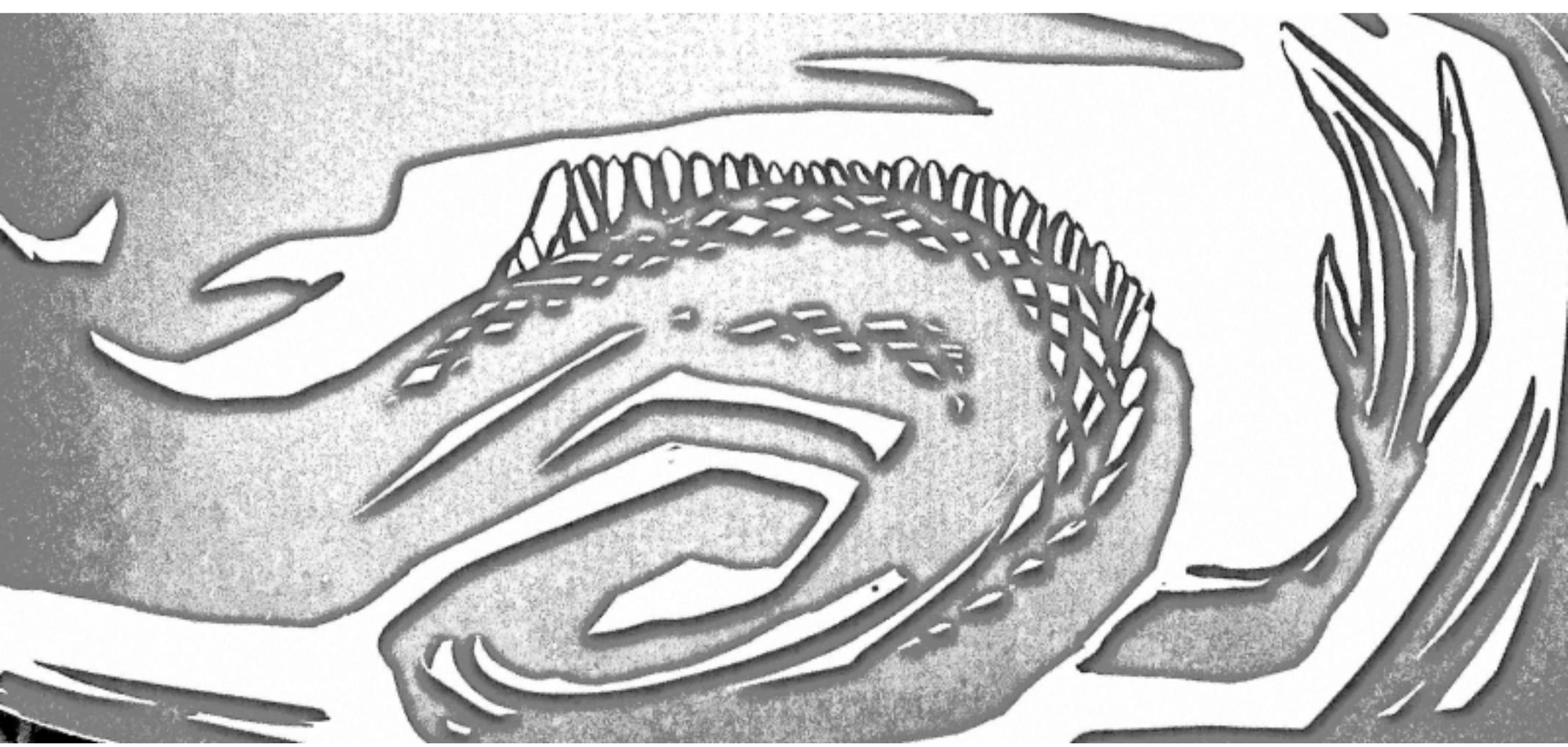




A city yet stood, just one remaining, and there all forces had gathered to settle the fate of gods and mortals.<sup>14</sup> Into that great battle ran Hrani and the hunters of Raegrec's war-pack, and the numbers around them passed all reckoning. Many great fighters were slain by the Wolves, choking on their own blood as the swift blades of Fenrys cut their throats. Old oaths of the ice were shouted, great deeds were done.

In the distance, Hrani spied the banners of the Serpent, and the pack strove against the press of war to reach it.

There fell Tyr Blackbrow, felled by a spell-marked spear that cut through his armour. There fell Gunnar of the Long-Knife, overcome by the poisons of the enemy. There fell Rostar the Reckless, who laid down his life to protect his pack-leader. All were gone, their tales ended, save Hrani Fireaxe, who alone still fought. Closer came the ragged banners of the enemy, and at last he saw the face of the one he sought to kill.





## VII. OF THE CUTTING OF HRANI'S THREAD

Who knows the ways of fate? Who knows which stories must be written, and which must be forgotten? The Serpent was not destined to meet his end that day, either by Hrani's hand or by the hand of another. Greater warriors than Hrani had been slain by that cursed daemon blade, and greater warriors yet rose up to confront it.

Of the countless evil creatures assembled in that place, one was named Charax. He was old beyond measuring, having been born when the Imperium was young and treachery had yet to darken the bliss of Holy Terra. His armour was defiled, and his sword was stained with the blood of countless noble souls. Anger ate away at him, consuming his flesh from the inside, so that he was hollow, and withered, and yet remained stronger than steel bonds. For many days he had fought under the war-banners of the invaders, and none had yet bested him. Seeing the impetuous Son of Russ running through the press of fighters, he made sure to intervene, believing that another soul would soon be ended at his hands.

As Hrani raced to face Charax, his axe burned with strange fire once more. The two mighty warriors hewed at one another, their wrath so great that no others were able to intervene. Charax was the mightier, steeped in spells and sustained by foul incantations, but Hrani was the purer of spirit, and the souls of his pack-brothers still lingered around him, lending strength to his blows.



*15. Fragmentary evidence supports this account. Part-redacted Naval records sequestered at Kantrael mention a large impact towards the end of the planetary conflict, one that was of sufficient mass to destabilise the biosphere. It may be that a major battleship was deliberately diverted into the planet, or that the orbital conflict was of sufficient intensity to generate the same effect. It speaks volumes of the heroism of the defenders that such tactics were resorted to, in order to quell the last resistance.*

‘Faithless traitor!’ said Hrani, as he fought. ‘Your place is in the Underverse, where your soul must shrivel. You are a ghost, a phantom, a relic of old treachery.’

At that, Charax laughed, and fought back with renewed zeal. ‘Fine words, that yet mean nothing. Observe! Your empire is weak, its armies already scattered. This is but the beginning. Soon we shall be at the walls of Terra itself.’

The two of them matched one another for a great length of time. Charax gave Hrani a mighty wound, striking deep with his long-blade. Hrani was able to puncture the monster’s armour, using the flames of his axe to break the ancient plate apart.

So occupied were they in their duel, that neither was aware of the great upheavals taking place around them. The Serpent, who had failed in his quest to destroy all the defenders of the Gate, had ushered in his last gambit - a summoning of his great flagship, so vast and so imposing that its very presence was enough to crack the world’s surface below. As it fell, like a dark star from the void, the earth broke apart, exposing the fiery depths of the chasms underneath. Soon all warriors were fleeing from that place, lest they be caught up in the cataclysm.<sup>15</sup>

Hrani and Charax, though, fought on, driven by their hatred of one another. Even as flames leapt about them, they hewed with their blades, breaking the edges of both. With cracked steel, they continued to duel, balancing on the earth-plates as they tilted and crumbled.



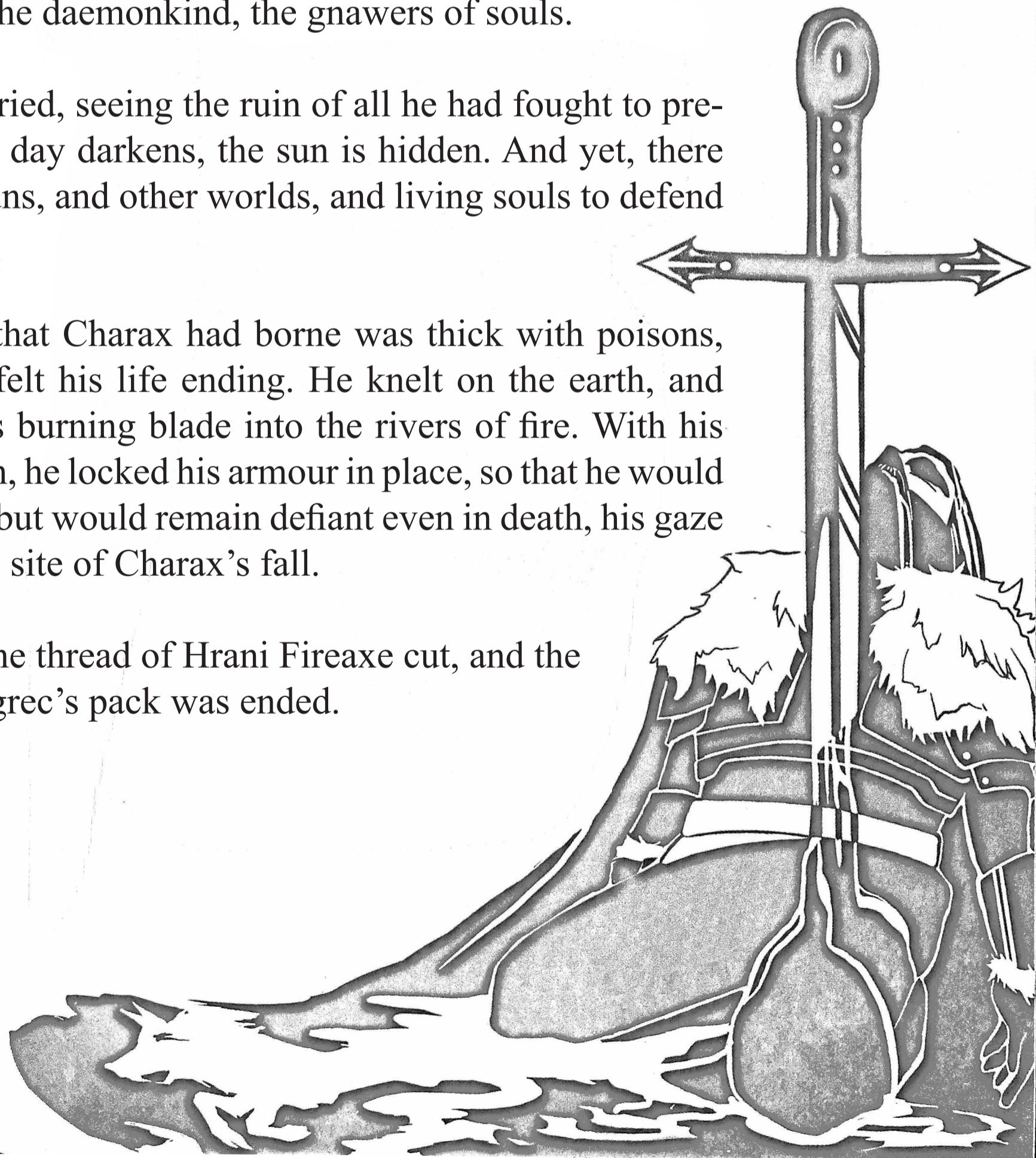
Eventually, Hrani saw his chance, and struck home with his flame-surrounded blade. His blow was guided by fate, watched over by Russ himself, and clove the monster's neck in two. The vile warrior was killed instantly, and his body fell below the rivers of fire, where it was consumed.

Hrani had prevailed, but even as he raised his voice in triumph, the words of victory died on his lips. He could feel his wounds drag him down, and knew then that they were mortal. He could see the armies fleeing across the burning plains, and saw that Charax's boasts had come true. The Serpent himself was gone, fleeing like a whipped cur, but in his place came the spirits of the Underverse itself, whole legions of the daemonkind, the gnawers of souls.

‘Ach!’ he cried, seeing the ruin of all he had fought to preserve. ‘The day darkens, the sun is hidden. And yet, there are other suns, and other worlds, and living souls to defend them yet.’

The blade that Charax had borne was thick with poisons, and Hrani felt his life ending. He knelt on the earth, and plunged his burning blade into the rivers of fire. With his last strength, he locked his armour in place, so that he would not topple, but would remain defiant even in death, his gaze set over the site of Charax's fall.

Thus was the thread of Hrani Fireaxe cut, and the last of Raegrec's pack was ended.





## VIII. OF THE FALL OF THE HELWINTER GATE

Many were the warriors felled on that black day, and many were the weapons lost to their sacred warbands. As the Gate itself was cast into fire and ruin, all had to flee lest the breaking world's fury overtook them. Eir Crow, gothi of the Wolves of Fenrys, was among the last to take ship. Before he departed, he looked out across the battlefield, seeing the ruin of the final fortress. As the earth seethed, he caught sight of Hrani's lifeless body amid the flames, still kneeling. And so Eir Crow's ship sped across the plains to retrieve him, and take his corpse on board.

'He, at least, will not be taken by these carrion beasts,' said Eir Crow. 'His warrior-spirit shall give life to others.'<sup>16</sup>

Daemonkind were gathering then, ready to feast on the body of the warrior. The gothi came there ahead of them, and he used his arts to deny them their prize. Hrani's body was taken up and placed within the ship with all reverence. He was carried across the flaming lands, laid out like a chieftain of the old ice. His axe was gone, but flickers of fire still ran across his broken armour. As he lay in silence, the ghosts of his pack-brothers gathered about his bier, ready to escort his soul to the Halls of Russ.

All those who still lived made haste for the void. Battles were still to be fought there, desperate amid the wheeling stars, and the death of many ships still lay ahead. The Helwinter Gate was open, and hordes of the corrupted host poured through its many portals.

*16. A reference, no doubt, to the Adeptus Astartes' progenoid glands, which according to the Codex Astartes may be salvaged from the dead for implantation into new warriors. No reliable records of gene-seed retrieval from Cadian exist, though the importance placed on the practice by all Chapters would indicate that numerous samples were likely salvaged before the final withdrawal.*



17. *The question of numbers remains hard to quantify, given the secrecy around recruitment for the Chapter. Inquisitor Horthos Ghel of the Ordo Hereticus has stated more than once that he believes the Wolves of Fenris to operate with far in excess of the thousand warriors originally permitted to them by the Codex Astartes. Some estimates run as high as five thousand, though most are considerably less. If a conservative figure of 2,500 is settled upon, and the comments in this text are to be taken seriously, then it is possible the Chapter was down to a few hundred active warriors at the end of the Canadian campaign. Given their recorded participation in the conflict at Armageddon, in addition to the battles recounted here, such deleterious rates of attrition cannot entirely be ruled out.*

High King Grimnar, who had fought many battles of his own that day, ordered his surviving warriors into the sea of stars.

‘Twice now we have been bested,’ he said, war-fury still hot in his veins. ‘Twice now the enemy has proved victorious.’

‘It will not be always so,’ said Caller-of-Storms. ‘Though the Gate is broken, we have other fortresses to guard.’

‘But who is left to man the ramparts? Less than a tithe of our strength now remains to us. And how shall we bring new blood to our brotherhood, when all on Fenrys has been destroyed?’<sup>17</sup>

‘A way will be found,’ said Caller-of-Storms. ‘Fate has not decreed our destruction yet, nor has Russ returned to lead us to the Time of Wolves.’<sup>18</sup>

And so the Wolves of Fenrys returned to the sea of stars, making course for their





home fastness. Though they had fought valiantly, on that day the enemy proved stronger, and all knew that more sorrow lay ahead for the worlds of humankind.

And yet, hope still remained. The enemy had also been grievously wounded by the steadfast defence of the Gate, and for many years was unable to muster such a fearsome army again. Though ravaged by their long war, the Wolves were able to garrison the Mountain on Fenrys once more, and begin the work to recover their losses. Their Priests took the warrior-spirit of those who had fallen, and used it to strengthen the sword-hands of those who wished to join the shield-host of Russ.

So it was that Hrani Fireaxe, though ended on the plains of Helwinter, gave a final gift to the people of his hearth. One day, at a time appointed by inevitable fate, another warrior of the eternal ice would rise up to avenge his death, and the enemies of Russ would know fear in their hearts again.

*18. A reference to the belief that the primarch Leman Russ will return to lead the Chapter into the final battle at the end of the galaxy. Such a belief was considered fanciful by most Imperial scholars for many centuries. Recent events, of course, have forced a number of them to reconsider such scepticism.*

