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## ***WULFRIK***

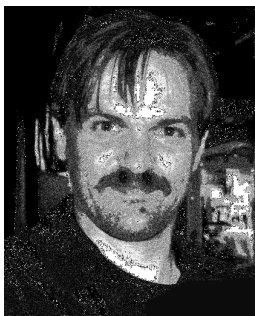
*A Warhammer Heroes novel*

*By C. L. Werner*

Emerging from the mists, Wulfrik the Wanderer brings destruction and death everywhere he treads. Cursed by the Ruinous Powers, the champion must travel across the Old World and seek prizes to appease the forces of Chaos. But now dark forces plot against Wulfrik, and he must discover the enemy within or else his soul will be lost to the Dark Gods forever.

### **About the author**

C. L. Werner was a diseased servant of the Horned Rat long before his first story in *Inferno!* magazine. His Black Library credits include the Chaos Wastes books *Palace of the Plague Lord* and *Blood for the Blood God*, *Mathias Thulmann: Witch Hunter*, *Runefang* and the *Brunner the Bounty Hunter* trilogy. Currently living in the American south-west, he continues to write stories of mayhem and madness set in the Warhammer World.



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The following is an excerpt from *Wulfrik* by C. L. Werner. Published by the Black Library. Games Workshop, Willow Road, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, UK.

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ENORMOUS, MAN-LIKE, the huge tracks gouged the barren face of the snowfield, a black line fading into the howling gale. Pressed so deeply into the ice that bare rock shaded their depths, the prints made a clear trail even in the driving snow. It would take hours for the tracks to be covered. Long before then, Jokull would lead his captain to his prey.

The Norscan hunter whipped the scaly, lash-like appendage that grew from his left shoulder against his beard, knocking frost from the thick black hair. Jokull shivered beneath the heavy furs he wore, casting anxious eyes at the land around him. For days they had climbed the jagged slopes until Jokull thought they must be at the roof of the world, and still he could see the grey shapes of even higher peaks looming behind the falling snow. Much higher and surely they would be crushed beneath the feet of the sun when the Blood God's hunt chased it across the morning sky! The vision made the hunter tremble and place the little bone icon of the Skull Lord between his teeth. He could feel the iron staples fastened to the talisman stab into his gums, could taste the coppery tang of blood in his mouth. The gods of the north were angered when prayers did not come with offerings.

Wailing like the frozen wraith of a Kislevite witch, the winds swirled and crashed around Jokull. Spitting the bone icon from his mouth, he could see the blood covering it freeze into icy mush as the talisman dangled around his neck. The men of Norsca were used to the brutality of winter and the savagery of the elements, but even an experienced woodsman like Jokull felt oppressed by the harshness of these snow-

swept mountains. It was as sinister and hostile a place as anything the skalds sang of in the sagas.

Jokull lifted his bow, the fingers of his right hand – the one that hadn't been changed by the gods – rubbing the feathers fitted to the arrow nocked against the string. Black feathers, crow feathers, feathers hungry for the taste of meat. The hunter placed great faith in such feathers, trusting them to speed the arrow to its target. With such arrows he had brought down snow bears and ice tigers and more than a few men when the hunting season faded into the time of war. Now, however, the hunter's faith in his weapon wavered.

Surely no clean beast would dwell in such a blighted place. The cold was like a gnawing thing that chewed through fur and cloth and skin to seep down into the bones of a man. The wind was a howling torment more furious than the gales upon the Sea of Claws, driving the snow like a thousand daggers into the face of any bold enough to stand against its fury. The air was thin and poor, like the breath of a frozen grave. A man's lungs gasped for it, gulping it down in desperate shudders but never drawing in enough to satisfy his body.

No clean beast would live in such a place, Jokull decided. He cocked his head as he fancied he heard a deeper howl sound behind the wind. His skin crawled as he heard the sound repeated, even more distinctly, from the higher peaks. Again the cry came, this time from further ahead, a low, growling sound that slowly rose into a piercing shriek. There was an unmistakable note of threat in the cries, a threat that made Jokull glance back the way he had come. How far was it to the ship, he wondered, and could he reach it before the crying things decided he had ignored their warning?

The hunter shook his head and spat a blob of blood into the snow. He could not deny the fear he felt but he did curse his foolishness. There was no going back. The way back was closed to him. It had been ever since he signed on to the crew of the *Seafang* and swore a life-oath to her captain. There was

no retreat for the men of the *Seafang*, only victory or death. Their captain made sure of that.

The thought made Jokull smile. However terrible the creatures of the mountains were, he would bet his beard that his captain was worse. Jokull had only believed half of the stories told about the captain of the *Seafang* when he joined her crew. Now he knew better. He had seen trolls butchered like sheep by his captain, watched as daemons cringed before him and begged for mercy. He had been there when the fleshless wight of Jarl Unfir rose from its cairn only to have its bony back broken across the captain's knee.

Wulfrik the Wanderer was a name spoken of in awed whispers, and with good reason.

He looked back, willing his gaze through the falling snow. Beyond the flurry, he could see the grey figures of the crew marching in his steps. Even as a shadow veiled by snowfall, Jokull had no trouble picking out Wulfrik. There was an aura of almost palpable menace that exuded from the man, a sense of wrongness about him that compelled even as it horrified.

The master of the *Seafang* stomped through the snow, emerging from the flurry to glower at Jokull. The hunter was a big man, but Wulfrik towered a full head above him. Heavy furs cloaked his ogriish frame, while a hairy cape cut from the scalp of a giant billowed about his shoulders. With every step, Jokull could hear the rattle of bones and chains rise from the champion as Wulfrik's gruesome trophies clattered against the armour he wore beneath his furs.

Jokull lowered his bow, a cold more piercing than the snowstorm running through him as he considered that Wulfrik might decide a readied weapon meant a challenge. The champion had a brutal way of answering challenges. Jokull would rather face Jarl Unfir again than cross blades with Wulfrik.

The champion chuckled at Jokull's unease, his laughter sounding more like a wolf worrying at a bone than the sort of sound a man should make. Wulfrik's thick crimson beard parted, exposing his fearsome smile. Until he smiled, an

observer might think Wulfrik's body untouched by the gods, what the weak men of the south would call 'uncontaminated'. But the instant he bared his teeth, the change was there for all to see. Wulfrik's teeth weren't teeth, but long sharp fangs, fangs of a beast, not a man. When he was drunk, Jokull had seen Wulfrik bite through iron with those fangs. One day, the champion swore, he would be strong enough to do the same to steel.

'Why have we stopped, weasel-slayer?' The question, when it came, did not rise from the hulking Wulfrik, but from a tall blond Sarl standing just behind the champion. The Sarl was a contrast to Wulfrik, his chiselled features presenting a face that was more becoming than the champion's fearsome countenance, yet still possessing formidable strength: Broendulf the Fair, one of the most renowned warriors in all the holdings of the Sarls.

'I don't like these tracks,' Jokull said, making a point to address his words to Wulfrik and not the surly Broendulf.

'I don't like anything that keeps me out in these Tchar-cursed mountains, but you don't hear me complaining,' Broendulf snapped at the hunter.

'Worried all this snow is going to scar those girly cheeks of yours!' laughed an ashen-haired reaver, his leathery skin darkened to the colour of ale and his right leg a mass of ivory-hued bones bound together with steel chain. A fleshless skull grinned where the reaver's knee should have been. Bitten off by a kraken during a misadventure on the northern seas, Arngeirr's leg had been replaced with the bones of the man who had caused the accident. Even without any skin on it, some said they could see the family resemblance when they looked at the skull of his father.

'You should grow out your beard!' cackled another warrior, running a hand banded in steel through the wiry black hair that covered his face from chin to eyelash. The hairy Norscan's eye vanished behind a lewd wink. 'Gives the wenches something to keep hold of!'

‘The only wench you ever kept hold of said “oink”, Njarvord!’ another of the warriors snarled. The man, his shaven head covered in tattoos, drew a curved sea-axe from his belt and brandished it as the hairy Njarvord rounded on him. ‘You know the rule, Baerson! First spills blood tastes the captain’s sword!’

What little flesh showed past Njarvord’s thick beard flushed crimson. His armoured hands clenched tight at his sides, the muscles in his arms bulging with frustrated violence. ‘One day, I’ll make you eat your words, Haukr,’ the warrior promised with a menacing growl. ‘One tooth at a time.’

Wulfrik noticed the squabbling of his men. He was not so detached that he was not aware of the tension and anger growing inside them. Even for men as accustomed to hardship and cold as the hardy stock bred in Norsca, the mountains were an ordeal. But that ordeal was nearing its end.

‘Why don’t you like these tracks?’ Wulfrik suddenly asked.

It took a moment for Jokull to realise the question was directed at him. The hunter waved his tentacle at the steady line of tracks in the snow. ‘They’re too straight, too direct,’ he said. ‘Not like something just minding its own self. Not like something knowing it was being hunted and trying to get away. These feel slow and careful, like something that knows where it is going and why.’

Wulfrik nodded his head in agreement. ‘Indeed they should,’ he told the hunter, his voice rising in a soft roar so that the rest of his crew could hear him. ‘The offering we stalk knows we are here and has for some time.’ He gestured with one of his gnarled, hairy hands to the snowy ground all about them. ‘There are rocks here to either side of this trail, rocks sturdy enough to hide the passing of many large beasts.’

One of the Norscans came forwards, staring hard into Wulfrik’s savage face. Alone among the crew this grizzled old warrior would dare to look at their captain in such a fashion. Alone among men, would Wulfrik allow him to do so.

The old warrior was of the Sarls, a veteran marauder named Sigvatr. In his time, Sigvatr had been many things: war-chief, mercenary, bear-hunter, pirate and slave. Of all the things he had been, Sigvatr took the most pride in being the mentor of Wulfrik Worldwalker.

Sigvatr had been there, that night after the Battle of a Thousand Skulls when Wulfrik had made his drunken boast. He had been with Wulfrik long before and often warned the champion against his hubris. Now, the champion did not forget the man whose advice he had once spurned.

‘The beast leads us into a trap,’ Sigvatr said. It was not a question.

Wulfrik’s fierce smile showed beneath his beard. ‘The offering will not escape,’ he said. ‘Nothing chosen by the gods can escape,’ he added in a bitter growl.

THE CRIES GREW louder and more frequent the deeper into the mountains the small band of men pressed. Echoing strangely off the icy rocks, twisted by the howling wind, there was no way to determine distance or direction when the screams sounded. Only the uncomfortable fact that the calls came not from one creature but from many could be learned from the cries. It was a fact that fed the fear growing in each of the Norscans. Ferocious in battle, unafraid of death when it stared at them from across a sword, the warriors now felt dread. The eerie sensation of being stalked by an unseen, unknown enemy was new to them. In their own lands, in the mountains and fjords of Norsca, they would at least have known the ground they fought upon and taken strength from that knowledge. Here they felt as far from their homeland as if they had been drawn up into one of the moons.

Only Wulfrik gave no sign of fear. What terror could the world hold for a man who had been cursed by the gods themselves?

But caution was not the same as fear. Wulfrik was wary as he pushed his body through snow that now came up to his knees. He did not turn his eyes away from the shadowy slopes

of the high peaks; his ears remained trained upon the wailing cries that echoed behind the wind. Like his teeth, his senses had been sharpened by the gods. No eyes untouched by the gods could have seen the grey shadow plummeting down the side of the mountain or heard the soft rumble that rolled behind the howling wind and shrieking beasts.

‘Run, dogs!’ Wulfrik roared at his men. ‘Run or sleep in the Crow God’s larder!’ The champion pitted deeds against words, turning and sprinting back down the trail with the ferocious speed of a charging bull. The other Norscans blinked at him in surprise then hurried to follow their overlord. Anything that could make Wulfrik turn tail was no such thing that any of them wanted to risk meeting.

The soft rumble was no longer masked by the wind. It grew into a groaning clamour, taking strength with each passing breath. The ground shuddered as though from the steps of a titan. Ice cracked and crumbled from the rocks, snow shivered upon the ground. One of the Norscan warriors dared lift his eyes to the high peaks. He screamed in terror as he saw a great shadow, like the hand of a malignant god, reaching down for them, blotting out the night sky.

The scream spurred the warriors on, urging their pounding hearts to greater effort. The heavy snow about their feet seemed to drag on them, sucking them down like a swampy morass. Men struggled desperately to press on, knowing that each passing instant brought a terrible doom rushing down upon them.

As the last of the starlight was darkened by the growing shadow a colossal bellow resounded through the mountains. To the Norscans it sounded like the mightiest wave ever dredged up from the Sea of Chaos had come smashing against the earth. They could feel the impact quivering through their bones, knocking many from their feet. The air was filled with frost, an icy cloud that danced and swirled like flames rising from a fire. Some of the men choked as the frozen mist was sucked into their panting lungs.

Wulfrik turned as the echoes of the avalanche died away. Grimly he pushed his way back through his exhausted warriors, turning his eyes again to the high peaks. His fangs gleamed in the returning starlight. The valley had been obliterated in the slide, great mounds of snow rising amid broken boulders and the splintered trunks of trees snapped like twigs before the avalanche. An icy pall, like frozen smoke, drifted slowly across the devastation. The champion studied the havoc, appreciating the unbelievable force his enemy had loosed against him. He did not look aside when he heard steps behind him.

‘How many?’

Sigvatr’s face was twisted into a grimace. ‘At least six, and Bjornn’s leg is broken.’

‘Then say seven,’ Wulfrik told the old warrior. A calculating fire blazed in the champion’s eyes. ‘That will leave enough.’

‘Enough for what!’ raged a furious Njarvord. ‘All of us were nearly killed in that avalanche!’ The hairy Baersonling clenched his fist tight about the huge double-axe he carried. ‘You seem like you were expecting this!’

Fangs shone in Wulfrik’s smile. ‘Have a care, Njarvord. I can afford to lose seven. I may decide I can lose eight.’ The champion’s smile became a full snarl. In an instant, his sword leapt from its orc-skin sheath. Njarvord backed away timidly from the dull black blade, his nervous eyes locked on the skull dangling from the sword’s hilt.

Wulfrik had already dismissed the outraged warrior from his thoughts. He was listening instead to the sounds of the mountain. The wailing cries were silent now. In their place there was only the occasional clatter of stone or the crash of falling ice.

‘Dogs of Norsca!’ Wulfrik bellowed at the scattered marauders. The warriors forgot their hurts and fatigue, compelled by the force in Wulfrik’s voice to heed his words. ‘The bones of your brothers lie buried in the snow, far from the halls of their ancestors! The beasts that visited such craven

death upon your comrades come now to feast upon their still-warm flesh! You run when I tell you to run,' Wulfrik snarled. 'Now fight when I tell you to fight!' The champion raised his sword high above his head, starlight shining across the murderous edge of the blade. The skull tied to its hilt seemed to direct a mocking grin at the ragged warriors.

There was no time for the minds of the marauders to think about Wulfrik's words. A hulking shape rose from the snow bank beyond the Norscan champion, a great white figure of claws and fangs twice as tall as the champion. With a fearful roar, the hairy beast leapt for Wulfrik, its talons spread to rake the man's flesh from his bones.

In a single motion, Wulfrik spun, ducking beneath the sweep of the monster's claws. He thrust his sword into its hurtling bulk, letting its own momentum help to skewer it upon his blade. The leathery, ape-like face of the creature grew flush with pain, its amber eyes becoming wide with agony. The beast tried to pull itself off the champion's sword, but Wulfrik wrapped his hand in the creature's shaggy white fur, dragging it back down the blood-slick blade.

The monster shrieked again, slashing at Wulfrik with its claws. The heavy talons shredded the outer layer of furs the champion wore but scraped uselessly against the armour beneath. Its own blood bubbling from its jaws, the white beast leaned down, trying to bite the human's sneering face. Wulfrik twisted away from the desperate attack, in the same motion ripping his sword from the beast's body. The monster collapsed with an earth-shivering impact, flopping obscenely in a pile of its own entrails.

The *Seafang's* crew gave voice to a fierce cheer as they witnessed the fearsome prowess of their captain. Doubts about the leadership of their master were forgotten as the spirit of battle overwhelmed them. With the example of Wulfrik before their eyes, with his vengeful words still in their ears, the warriors did not hesitate when they saw more hairy monsters charging down the slopes. Shouting the black names of their

gods and ancestors, the Norscans took up their weapons and rushed to meet the oncoming monsters.

For a moment, Wulfrik felt pride swell in his chest, the pride of a leader who exults in the valour of those he leads. Then the darkness inside him rose up to smother the sensation. The champion's face became stern, callous. He did not care anything for these men. He could not. He had to wield them as he wielded his sword, without thought or compassion. It was the only way he could ever hope to appease the gods.

Cold fury swelled within Wulfrik as the pain of all that he had lost filled him. The gods didn't do anything in half-measures. When they claimed a man, they claimed everything he had – or hoped to have.

The champion brought his boot smashing into the face of the beast writhing on the ground. The impact snapped its head back, breaking its neck like a stick despite the thick layers of muscle and fat that surrounded it. Wulfrik stalked away from the quivering corpse, his steps as unhurried as those of death itself.

Yhetee. Wulfrik could not say how he knew that was the name for the beast, any more than he could say how he knew that these were the Mountains of Mourn. Thoughts seemed to simply place themselves in his brain, bestowing upon him such knowledge as he needed. He knew it was the work of the gods, this strange knowledge, for the thoughts only came when he was hunting the offerings they demanded of him. A shaman of the Kurgan tribes had called Wulfrik blessed, saying he had been granted the 'Gift of Tongues' by the gods. The shaman hadn't been able to explain more, even when Wulfrik began burning the toes from his feet. He hadn't been able to say where the thoughts came from, or how to make them stop.

Wulfrik wiped the icy blood of the yhetee from his sword and glared at the snowfield where his warriors made their stand against the shaggy white monsters. The avalanche had filled the valley with snow, making it difficult for the men to

move. With every step they sank to their hips in the soft slush, fighting to keep their balance. The yhetee, despite being nearly twice the height of a man and many times as massive, manoeuvred over the snow with contemptuous ease, their great bulks capably supported by their huge feet and widely splayed toes. Wulfrik was reminded of Varg seal-hunters and the snow-shoes they wore when plying their trade.

The yhetee did not quite outnumber his men, but they did not need strength of numbers in their favour. Each of the beasts was many times as powerful as a man, and as if their fangs and claws were not enough, many of them bore crude axes fashioned from tree limbs and ice. When one of the howling monsters charged a marauder, the icy edge of its axe cut as cleanly through the man's neck as any steel blade. Another Norscan had his axe and the arm that held it chopped in two by the sweep of a yhetee's crude weapon.

At the same time, Wulfrik's warriors managed to fell some of their foes. A screaming yhetee, four of Jokull's arrows sprouting from its hairy hide, fell to Broendulf's blade. Njarvord threw himself into the fight with the vicious madness of a berserker, hacking at the foe he had chosen with such ferocity that when it at last stumbled and fell it was little more than a dripping mass of bloody meat. Arngeirr, the sinister reaver from the sea, slashed his way through the yhetee with murderous skill, his kraken-tooth sword carving through the beasts with the same horrible efficiency as their own icy axes. Only the reaver's infirmity held him back, his bone leg slowing him as he hobbled through the snow.

Wulfrik savoured the fray, enjoying the smell of battle. Almost, he was tempted to throw himself into the melee, to lose himself in the joy of fighting as he once had. No, he decided, he was past such things now. Before, if he fell, he would only lose his life. Now there was much more to lose and much more to risk. Kings and warlords could only punish a man to the point of death. Gods could visit damnation upon even those safely in the halls of their ancestors.

Ignoring the sounds of battle raging all around him, Wulfrik cupped his hand to his mouth. The Gift of Tongues, the tortured shaman had called that part of Wulfrik's curse. It was his uncanny ability to instantly know and speak the language of any enemy. It had allowed him to curse and threaten the Kurgan in the shaman's own dialect, it had allowed him to do the same to an orc warboss and a Bretonnian earl and even a thane of the dwarfs. Even the voices of beasts were not unknown to him when the gods desired such things as an offering.

Wulfrik raised his voice in a sharp, ululating howl, a piercing shriek that clawed at the winds and boomed off the mountains. Many of the yhetee paused in the fighting to stare at him in bewilderment and wonder, their primitive brains recoiling at the sight of a man who could shout such abuse in the shriek-scream that served them as a language.

A furious wailing roar thundered from the snow-swept night. It was a sound to freeze the blood, like the snarl of winter itself. There was savagery and hate in the sound, the pure hate of the primitive, unburdened by thought or reason. It threatened agony and promised horror, that cry. The force behind the howl would offer no clean death. It would rip the belly and devour the guts of its prey while life yet pulsed through its foe's veins.

Wulfrik's challenge had been answered.

The other yhetee retreated as a great grey shape ploughed across the snowfield, abandoning their melee with the Norscans to avoid drawing the wrath of their own leader. One marauder, too slow to follow the example of the monsters, found himself in the path of the charging beast. He had time to scream once before the grey creature's slashing claw opened him from neck to groin.

Wulfrik steadied himself as the monstrous thing came rushing at him. A cold, fatalistic calmness quelled the stirrings of fear that churned his belly. It was the deadly courage of a man who knows there is no retreat, only triumph or

destruction. Of such men, the sagas are made, though they are seldom alive to hear their tales sung.

The monster hesitated as it drew near Wulfrik. It was a massive yhetee, twice again as tall as any of its kin, its hair darkened by age to a dull silvery grey. Its claws were sheathed in the same steely ice as the axes of the younger yhetee and its fangs were like ivory sabres jutting from its jaws. There was wisdom and intelligence in its black eyes, enough reason to know when it was being hunted and to draw its hunters into its own trap. Enough imagination to be suspicious of this little man who stood so boldly before its fearsome charge.

Wulfrik lifted his face and stared into the greyback's eyes. From his lips came a feral grunt, the most base insult the language of the yhetee could offer.

The greyback shrieked in rage, its bestial temper overcoming its reason. The monster lunged at Wulfrik, the murderous claws lashing out. The champion did not trust his armour against the frozen talons of the greyback. Instead of standing against the monster's attack, he threw himself forwards and rolled beneath the yhetee's powerful arms. The black sword licked out, slashing across the monster's belly.

The greyback howled. Its powerful foot lashed out, kicking Wulfrik in the chest. He was thrown back, tossed across the snowfield like a boulder flung from a catapult. The champion crashed into the snow, sinking several feet into the soft icy ground. Snow collapsed in upon him, crashing down around him in a frozen mantle.

Wulfrik clawed at the snow, trying to find purchase, trying to gain a solid enough grip to free himself from an icy grave. Every effort brought more snow collapsing into the hole.

Suddenly a great paw smashed down through the roof of Wulfrik's prison. Talons of ice closed about his chest, coating his armour in hoarfrost. The Norscan could feel his blood turning to slush, could feel the breath freezing in his lungs. He struggled to free himself of the withering clutch, but the talons would not relent.

Slowly, Wulfrik was lifted from the snow. The greyback glared at him as it held him clenched in its claws. The yhetee swayed on its feet, its other paw pressed against the wound Wulfrik had slashed across its belly. Dark blood bubbled between its talons, staining the snow about its feet.

The greyback's ape-like face pulled back in a fierce grin. There was enough resemblance to something human about the yhetee's face that Wulfrik could tell it was gloating over its victory.

Fires of rage burned away the ice in his veins. Roaring, Wulfrik twisted his body, ignoring the sharp pain as his own armour tore his flesh. Sword gripped in both hands, the champion turned himself enough to bring the blade chopping down into the greyback's wrist.

Wulfrik crashed into the snow as the yhetee dropped him. This time his impact was only enough to sink him to his waist. Quickly the champion rose, ready to fend off the monster's next attack. His sword licked out as the greyback's claw slashed at his head. Sparks danced from his sword as ice and steel scraped against each other. Wulfrik could feel the shock of the impact rumble through the bones of his arms but he managed to retain hold of his weapon.

The greyback staggered away, snarling threats at the man who had crippled it. Wulfrik could see now that the cut across its belly was not deep, though the wound continued to bleed. The real injury the monster had suffered was where he had hacked into its wrist. The greyback's claw dangled from only a few tendons, looking as though it must fall off each time the monster moved.

Wulfrik waved his sword at the monster, daring it to attack. The mocking challenge did not need to be shrieked in the howling speech of the yhetee. Slapping its chest with its good claw, the goaded greyback rushed the Norscan.

Again, the beast proved itself more than a simple animal. Only a few feet from Wulfrik, it paused in its charge to dig its foot into the snow. This time when the monster kicked out at

the man, a white sheet of snow flew into his face, blinding him!

The instincts of a hundred battles made Wulfrik dive away rather than try to wipe the ice from his eyes as another man might. The marauder hurled himself from the path of the onrushing greyback, throwing himself into the snow. Even so, the yhetee's claw slashed near enough to him to catch the heavy cape he wore. The icy claws of the greyback cut through the giant-scalp as though it were cheesecloth, the tangled tatters dangling from its talons like a knight's pennant.

Wulfrik rose to meet the yhetee's next charge. Shielding his eyes from another shower of snow, he was able to dodge the claw as it came whistling at his head. Rolling low, he brought his blade raking across the greyback's ankle, cleaving its foot from its leg.

Shrieking, the greyback crashed into the snow. Wulfrik did not give it a chance to rise. Screaming a war cry only a little less savage than the howls of the yhetee, he leapt upon the struggling beast. Steel crunched through bone, stabbing through the yhetee's horned skull to impale the primitive brain within. The greyback made one furious effort to fling the champion off its back. Then it uttered a mewling whimper and its body collapsed back into the snow.

Wulfrik wrenched his sword free from the greyback's head. One foot planted upon the gory mess, he raised his bloodied weapon high and shouted into the night.

'Skulls for the Skull Throne!'

**WULFRİK** 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: 978-1-84416-892-7

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

ISBN: 978-1-84416-893-4

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