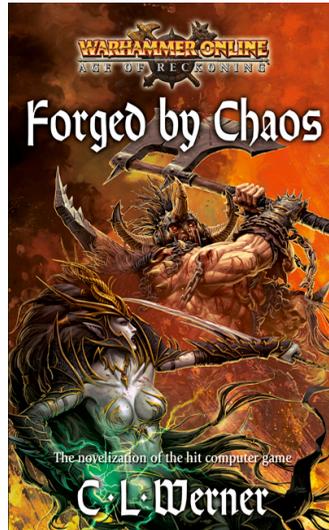


FORGED BY CHAOS

A Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning Novel

By C. L. Werner

The Forces of Destruction wage war upon the civilized lands and the Ravenhost is poised to march upon the Empire in an unstoppable tide. To ensure victory against the Order of the Griffon, the power of the Winds of Chaos must be fully unleashed. But to work such awesome magic, the marauder Kormak must dare the Bastion Stair, portal to the Realm of Khorne, and defy the Blood God's wrath. The warriors of the Ravenhost are not the only ones with an interest in harnessing Chaos. Treacherous dark elves and brutish orcs would each seize the power for themselves, while a desperate Imperial army races to deny all of their foes the dread might of Chaos.



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.

Visit the author's website at www.vermintime.com

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PALACE OF THE PLAGUE LORD

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

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Blood exploded from the Kurgan's nose as a leathery fist splattered it across the dark-haired barbarian's face. The Kurgan gave a wail of agony as pain roared through his body. In that moment of suffering, he forgot to bring his club chopping down into the slave's skull. It was an opportunity that would not come again.

Kormak ripped the heavy iron chain from the slaver's numbed fingers, then brought it whipping back, slashing open the man's face from brow to cheek. Blue-black blood dribbled from the wound with syrupy slowness as the slaver staggered back.

'Kill him!' the Kurgan roared even as Kormak's fist smacked a second time into his face, spilling him onto the rough paving of the street like a poleaxed ox.

Kormak spun around, glaring at the knot of black-faced slavers converging on him. He lashed the iron chain at them, cracking it like a whip. 'Who dies first?' he growled.

The slavers hesitated. Kormak was an imposing foe, a brawny brute of a Norscan, his limbs bulging with muscle, his skin peppered with tiny growths of bone. From either side of his head, ram-like horns thrust out from his skull. The features they framed were bestial, the nose pointed and flared like the beak of a bird of prey, the eyes little glowing embers burning from the shadow of his heavy brow. Sharpened fangs swarmed in his mouth, pushing against his cheeks and lips to further disfigure his face. Iron fetters hung in shattered disarray from his wrists and ankles

and the collar about his throat was warped and broken, cracked by nothing more than the force of the muscles in his neck.

A hulking Kurgan wearing a battered kettle helm and armour flayed from the hide of some immense reptile spat curses on the defiant slave and rushed the Norscan, a grimy axe lifted high. Kormak dove beneath the furious attack, smashing bone-studded shoulder into the slaver's chest. The armour split beneath the impact and the Kurgan was bowled through the ranks of his fellows. Kormak snarled in his enemy's face, using the impetus of his momentum to drive the slaver into the steely mass of the iron wagon in which the Kurgans transported their wares. Ugly, thorn-like spikes jutted from the curled bars of the cage that rose from the bed of the wagon, sharp fangs of rusty metal from which the slavers had hung the decaying tatters of those too weak to endure the hard trek across the Wastes. Kormak's victim shrieked as he was smashed into the side of the cage, spikes punching through breast and belly.

Kormak seized the slaver's face, twisting it and pounding it against the bars, impaling the Kurgan's skull on a spike with such force that the disembodied rib cage already spitted upon it was crushed into splinters. The Kurgan's entire body shivered and writhed, twitching like a beetle on a pin. Kormak was quick to tear the rusty axe from the dying slaver's nerveless fingers, giving a bestial grunt of murderous pleasure as he felt the reassuring weight of steel in his hand.

'Now let's give him some company on his way to meet the Crow God,' Kormak growled, hefting his stolen blade and fixing the other slavers with his malignant gaze.

The street upon which the fray was unfolding erupted into shouts and jeers. Pressed between the cyclopean walls that formed the bastion of the Inevitable City, the streets were a maze of winding lanes and passages, like the tunnels of a rat run, cast in perpetual shadow by the

gigantic walls. Huge flagstones formed the base of the street, ancient blocks of granite that had been worn down by time and elements, stained and pitted by the violence and evil that had unfolded upon them down through millennia. Stakes of iron and bronze rose from between the blocks, supporting tattered banners daubed in the profane symbols of the northern tribes or the rotting wreckage of one of the city's many victims. Braziers smouldered from poles of ivory and copper, casting strange, sickly lights through the eternal twilight of the city, sending weird clouds of noxious smoke crawling through the blackness.

Huddled against the steel-banded walls that towered hundreds of feet into the purple sky, like vagabonds seeking refuge in the bizarre angles of the bastion, hundreds of huts of leather and hide had been raised on supports of ivory, bone and bamboo. Here were the yurts of the Hung alongside the tents of Kurgan and the huts of Norscans, even the crude shelters of beastkin and still more savage creatures could be found squashed against the walls. Over all, glowing with spectral blue vapours, were the eyes of the bastion itself, eerie witch-lights dozens of yards across set high upon the battlements. Trapped within settings crafted from silver and engraved with swirling runes, the daemon-lights gnawed and gibbered, forever trying to break free of their bondage and slaughter the mortal things upon which their light fell.

This was the Inevitable City, a place of infamy and horror, held as a dark legend in civilised lands, told as a grim fable around the cook-fires of the northern tribes. Built by daemons or by the madness of some nameless god, it was said that no man found the Inevitable City, but rather that the city would find him when it decided he was ready. All roads in the Wastes, legend maintained, led from and to the Inevitable City, just as none of them did. One man might tread the same path for his entire life and never find the place while another might step from the familiar game trails of his own hunting grounds only to find the

Inevitable City looming before him. The city found who it would in its own time and none who stepped into the shadow of its mighty walls could leave before the city was finished with him. Such it had always been. So it would always be.

The crowd of onlookers were as motley as the cluster of tents and huts nestled against the walls. Sallow-faced Hung horsetraders eagerly cast bets with one another while Norscan reavers, still stinking of brine, howled encouragement to Kormak, but their voices were all but drowned out by the masses of dark-haired Kurgans roaring their own support of the slavers. Kormak glared at the jeering watchers, promising himself that after he killed his captors, he would wrest a tithe of wergild from the battered carcass of each and every one.

As Kormak's furious gaze swept over the crowd, he was brought up short by the smouldering eyes of one of the spectators. Like faceted gemstones, the weird eyes gleamed from a pale face darkened by the spiral of a writhing tattoo. It was a face steeped in wickedness, pinched and withered by pursuit of secrets obscene and arcane. The hook-like nose drooped beneath the loop of the enormous gold ring stabbed into one nostril and from which a tiny runestone depended. Silvery studs spitted the arching brow of a sloping forehead, shining alternately from the pale skin and the black of the tattoo in a strangely compelling pattern that made Kormak's thoughts feel fuzzy and pained. The Kurgan's colourful robes were a riotous assemblage of feathers torn from the wings of more breeds of bird than the Norscan believed could exist. A frilled collar, like the scruff of a vulture, engulfed the man's shoulders and about his waist was a girdle of flayed manflesh, the stretched face staring in mute agony from the Kurgan's midriff.

The Kurgan noticed Kormak's scrutiny and gave the Norscan a gruesome smile of blackened teeth and dripping fangs. There was condescension and scorn in the look, but also an air of avaricious

interest, like a man studying a boat or a horse he was interested in. Kormak scowled back, then spun around to deal with the bold slaver who had worked up the courage to brave his axe.

Gore spurted from the maimed stump of the slaver's arm, his bronze sword clattering on the flagstones while a mongrel hound darted out from the crowd to snatch up the severed limb itself. Kormak's arm closed about the shrieking man's neck, snapping it with a savage twist. He turned and flung the twitching corpse into another pair of slavers.

'Kill him!' the slave master roared anew, still wiping blood from his mangled face. 'I want that animal dead!'

The slavelord's commands did nothing to spur his fighters. Caught between the wrath of their master and the fury of their foe, they were quickly realising that Jun the Whip was the lesser threat.

Jun saw their hesitance, kicking one warrior forward, heedless of the way the unbalanced man was quickly dropped by the Norscan's axe.

'Kill him or I'll put you all on the block and sell you to the Slaaneshi of Khard!' Jun raged.

The threat urged his warriors to a new effort. They circled Kormak like a pack of wolves, snapping and jabbing at his flanks, trying to use their numbers to offset the Norscan's greater skill. Kormak was not deceived. As one Kurgan thrust at his side with a barbed spear, the Norscan spun to cleave the collarbone of a man rushing him from the other side.

Jun watched his men being butchered, new anger boiling behind his eyes. It was not the death of his men that worried him, but the expense of replacing them. He might be able to sell their carrion to the city's beastmen or some of the lower Hung tribesmen, but it would do little to offset his losses. The cursed Norscan was costing him a small fortune! First there had been the other slaves the Norscan had strangled in the cage so that he might take their ration of water, then there had been

Jun's brother-in-law, who made the mistake of stumbling too close to the bars one icy night while they were still in the Shadowlands. Jun was not enjoying the idea of telling his wife about that.

Now the filthy barbarian was chopping through Jun's most experienced man-catchers. Finding men of their experience and calibre was not going to be easy, much less after word got around how he had lost his old warband. Jun could feel that looming expense almost like a physical pain. Damn that Norscan and whatever fiends spawned him! And a curse on whatever mad impulse had made Jun seek out the Inevitable City to dispose of his wares rather than making the journey to Khard as he had intended! A chill went up the slaver's spine as he wondered if the idea had been his own, or if it had been the will of the city itself drawing him to it. Reflexively he fingered the talisman of Tzeentch hanging around his neck and banished the superstitious thought. The Inevitable City was just a place, a settlement lost in the Wastes like so many others. It had not been built by daemons. It did not have a mind and soul of its own.

'A pity you cannot take him alive.'

Jun spun around at the throaty voice, then checked his anger when he saw the feathered robe of the speaker. He could read the meaning of the weird tattoos that covered the robed man's face. This was one who served the Raven God and was infused with the strange magics of the Changer, one of his sacred zealots. It was taboo to strike down one of the god's divine healers, a crime which even the blood-crazed servants of Khome were loath to contemplate. The chill returned to Jun's spine as he found his eyes drawn to the bleached skull hanging from the zealot's girdle, little drops of glowing fire falling from its sockets to blaze and writhe on the ground.

'He must be a considerably valuable slave,' the zealot continued.

‘He is a mad cur that will be put down and sold for meat!’ Jun snapped, anger working its way past any deference common sense demanded he show the sinister priest.

‘A pity,’ the zealot shook his shaven head. ‘I should think he would bring a mighty price, especially after such a gripping spectacle as this street-show.’

Jun’s face contorted with annoyance. He gestured to the battle. One slaver was on hands and knees before Kormak, trying to push slimy loops of entrail back into his body while the Norscan held a second man by his neck a full foot off the ground. ‘My men are having enough problems killing him, much less recapturing him. I’ll be lucky to have a half-dozen left by the time this farce is finished!’

A black-toothed smile spread on the zealot’s face. ‘I could make it easier... for the right price.’

Jun eyed the feather-clad sorcerer with new suspicion. ‘Why... how would you...?’

‘The why is three talents of silver,’ the zealot answered, holding out his hand. ‘The how would turn your brain into soup if I explained it to you. Being that we are not in a sealed circle, it would not be healthy for myself either.’

Jun looked back at the swirling melee, watching Kormak bury his axe in the breastbone of an attacker, then wrench the weapon free in a spray of splintered ribs and torn flesh. ‘All right,’ the slave master agreed. He reached to one of his burly arms and began snapping off thin bands of silver. With a last, regretful look at the broken arm-rings, he handed them to the zealot.

The priest’s hand closed about the slaver’s silver. He reached to his girdle, the stretched mouth of the flayed skin opening to accept the money, snapping closed again with a wet smack when the zealot withdrew his fingers. Next, the zealot removed the skull from where it

dangled from his girdle. He lifted the desiccated head, staring into its dripping sockets. Faintly, Jun could hear words escaping the zealot's lips, each syllable seeming to leave a stain in his ears. He knew this was the Dark Tongue, the sacred language of Chaos itself, and was thankful that the zealot had not shared the secret of his magic.

Coils of dark energy swirled around the skull, pouring out of its mouth in a cloud of glowing mist. Across the street, a similar cloud began to form around the horned head of the Norscan. Kormak yelled, trying to swat away the fell magic with his axe. He glared through the press of his foes, fixing his eyes on the zealot. With another bellow of fury, Kormak charged through the slavers, rushing past them to confront the magician. Jun blanched as he saw the fearsome Norscan coming, but the sinister zealot just kept whispering to the skull.

Kormak was almost upon the feathered zealot when a great booming report, like the crack of thunder, rolled through the street. The glowing mist around the heads of both Norscan and skull swept into their chosen sanctuaries, seeping into living man and dead bone like water soaking into a sponge. Three steps away from the zealot, his axe raised high, Kormak gave a final shout and toppled senseless at the sorcerer's feet.

'He is not dead,' the zealot assured Jun when the slave master prodded Kormak's body with his foot. The black-toothed grin was back as the priest nodded to his recent patron. 'I think you will find him easier to sell this way.'

Jun grinned back. 'When he gets where I'm taking him, he will wish he was dead!'

* * *

The Inevitable City sat poised upon the lip of a mammoth crater, a pit stretching between the physical world and the eternal Void of Chaos. Swirling energies, coruscating tempests of black lightning and glowing

fog rose from the nothingness of the Void, tearing away at the crumbling lip of reality that sought to bind and contain it.

The searing essence of raw madness, the Void chewed incessantly at the city, corroding its foundations with the tireless labour of an eroding tide. The broken stumps of buildings and walls hung precariously over the bottomless insanity of the pit, bits and pieces of themselves levitating as they broke away, clinging to the emptiness of the Void for hours or centuries until at last sucked down into the Realm of Chaos.

Over this vacuity, this hole in the fabric of reality, great clods of earth and stone floated upon the aethyr. Thick chains of iron stretched from each chunk of ground, tethering them one to another until finally forming an unbroken line back to the crumbling lip of the crater. The combined essence of physicality of each fragment was stronger than they were alone, strong enough even to defy the devouring hunger of the Void. Upon the largest of these floating islands, surrounded on all sides by tethered satellites of stone, sprawled the Eternal Citadel, the poisonous heart of the Inevitable City.

Huge beyond the work of human hands, the Eternal Citadel hovered above the Void, lightning crackling about its spires and battlements, tentacles of darkness and glowing fog crashing about its walls of scarlet stone, consumed and drawn down into floating gargoyle heads to be trapped within the purple light shining from mouth and eye. The central spire of the citadel stabbed upward, twisting round and round upon itself like the horn of some titanic unicorn. The top of the tower was formed into the melting half-moon and unblinking eye, the most potent of Tzeentch's profane symbols. Purple light glowed from behind the stained glass of the eye, betokening the power chained within.

It was here, within the central spire that the mortal soul of the Inevitable City reigned. The Prince of Tzeentch, Warlord of the Raven Host, mightiest of the Changer's living pawns, Tchar'zanek was the

only man of sufficient cunning and power to bend the daemon spirit of the Inevitable City to his will. Lesser men would walk blindly into the fires of the Soul Forge or have both face and identity consumed by the Lyceum, to serve the spectral forces forever more as one of the Timeworn. These and even greater perils Tchar'zanek had mastered. He had stared into the Void, gazed into the abyss, felt the coruscating nothingness of the beyond stare back at him and he had not been driven mad by the experience. Chosen of the Raven God, Tchar'zanek had endured, endured to become the living instrument, the agent of the Changer upon the mortal plane. Field Marshal of the armies of Tzeentch, perhaps the last herald of the End Times.

The Chaos lord's throne room was a thing of insanity, like a great maw, needle-like fangs jutting from ceiling and floor, forming an unbroken lattice of malachite teeth. They were not constant, these fangs of stone, but subtly changed in size and shape whenever only the corner of an eye was watching them. Their weird mutters, like the babble of tiny children, formed a strange harmony with the crack of lightning outside the citadel walls. Those who concentrated too long upon the sounds could not shake the impression that the walls of the throne room and the lightning of the Void spoke to each other. Sometimes, Tchar'zanek would tilt his head and mutter back to the eerie sounds, seeming to converse with the daemonic essence of his domain.

It was within this chamber that Urbaal the Corruptor knelt upon armoured knee. Faintly, some dim part of Urbaal's mind rebelled at the otherworldly horror of this place, recoiling into the shadows of his soul. The warrior pondered the strange sensation, wondering what forgotten mystery it might reflect. Long had Urbaal been in the service of the Raven God, longer than a sane man would believe. He had forgotten much in his long quest for power and knowledge. Somehow he knew that he had once been something, someone other than Urbaal and it was

the sword of some kindlier land he had walked in the long ago. The warrior dismissed the simpering nostalgia. Had there been a woman, children even? A fragment, an image tried to form itself from tattered shreds of thought, but there was too little left for his memory to reclaim. It was unimportant anyway. Nothing was important except serving mighty Tzeentch, pleasing the capricious Changer of Ways and gaining the great rewards only a god could grant.

Urbaal had served the Raven God well in the long ages of his life. He bore the mark of his god upon his flesh, the sign of Tzeentch's Chosen. The armour that encased him, the skull-faced helm of gilded horns and slit visor, the blade of burnished bronze and shining sapphire, these were gifts from his god. The armour was forged from the souls of sacrificed daemons, the blade had been grown from a shimmering pool of crystal. They were things alive, more a part of Urbaal than his own forgotten memories. They sustained the champion through his many battles, preserved him through the long war waged between gods and mortals. They had become more real to him than his own flesh, so much so that Urbaal realised what it was his mind had tried to piece from tatters of memory; the image of his own face.

The Chosen rose, straightening his tall body of sapphire plates and golden adornment. There was a suggestion of raw physical might beneath the gilded vambraces and spiked pauldrons. From the shadows of his helm, Urbaal's eyes simmered like live coals, two points of smouldering light within a nest of shadow.

The figure beside Urbaal likewise rose from the floor. He was the antithesis of the Chosen in size and appearance, presenting a short, gaunt apparition of a man, swathed in light airy robes of powder blue and soft grey, a kilt of silvery scales draped about his waist and a thick cloak of what might have been beams of moonlight billowing about his shoulders. Like that of Urbaal, the countenance of Vakaan was hidden

behind the mask of his all-enclosing helm. Like the beaked face of a falcon, the silver helm stabbed forwards, great wings sweeping up and back to join into a peak above the sorcerer's skull. Vakaan was a magus, one of the warlocks of the Kurgan tribes, a villain steeped in the black arts of the Changer, able to draw daemons from the aethyr and into the physical world. It was Vakaan who spoke, and even the voice of this man who pitted his will against that of unearthly daemons shivered with awe. 'We come, Great Lord Tchar'zaneq, that through your command we may better serve the Changer.'

Urbaal watched the magus bow again, the silver helm brushing against the polished floor of the throne room. Some trick of light made it seem the sorcerer's head passed through his own reflection in the glistening obsidian tiles. The babble of the walls lessened, as though the citadel itself were waiting and listening.

The thing upon the throne stirred. Taller than Urbaal, more like an ogre than a man, Tchar'zaneq rose from his seat, descending from his dais on feet that were the paws of some reptilian beast rather than anything of human shape or form. The warlord's blue armour was warped and twisted around his mutated frame, all semblance of symmetry erased by the physical rewards his god had bestowed upon him. From his left side, only a single powerful arm hung from the Chaos lord's horned shoulder, but from his right side, a scythe-like insect-like limb sprouted beneath the human limb like some parasitic growth. As Tchar'zaneq moved, the noxious member flexed and quivered, as though eager to lash out and rip into flesh.

The warlord's head was like his shoulders, festooned with horns. The left horn was noticeably thicker and larger than the right and its calcified substance had bled downward, spreading to engulf the better part of Tchar'zaneq's face, hardening it into an armoured, unmoving carapace. The rest of Tchar'zaneq's face was pale, of the colour and

consistency of a fish's belly. The features were harsh, steeped in eternal evil and obscene secrets. The eyes of Tchar'zanek gleamed with the feral keenness of a panther and from each corner of his face, a thin membrane flickered to protect and moisten that indomitable gaze.

'You are here because it is the will of Tchar,' the warlord said, his voice betraying an inner power that was elemental in magnitude, like the bellow of angry storm gods. 'The names of Urbaal the Corruptor and Vakaan Daemontongue. Of all my pawns, it was your names the Changer sent to me.' Tchar'zanek stretched a clawed hand, indicating the thin figure of the sorcerer standing at the foot of his throne. The scrawny man was lost beneath the black folds of his robes, only his thorny helm serving to give the shadowy shape any distinction in the black-walled chamber.

The robed sorcerer opened a gigantic tome clutched in his wormy fingers. Sheets of wafer-thin steel turned beneath the gentlest sweep of those fingers. Urbaal could see glowing characters speeding from one page to the next, as though each steel page were writing itself as the sorcerer gazed upon it.

'Once there was made a weapon, a blade to tempt the rage of the Blood God,' the sorcerer's reedy voice crackled like kindling in a hearth. 'It was surrendered into the hands of unbelievers, those who in their foolishness would defy the true gods and who in their same foolishness still play their part in the Changer's plan. In time the weapon became a sacred relic, made sacred to one of the petty gods of the faithless lands. Its true purpose was hidden and its true name forgotten, and so was Great Tchar content for many ages of men.'

The sorcerer paused, the eyes behind his mask of thorns blazing with avarice. 'But it did not suit the plan of the Raven God to abandon the bane of his rival. A great warrior set upon the decaying towers of the elf-folk, bringing a mighty fleet to ravage the shores of their enchanted

island. The fleet was broken, the warhost shattered and the warrior's bones sank into the sea, and still he had served the Changer. One of the warlord's minions, a powerful magus, fell prisoner to the elves. By spell and torture they broke his spirit and from his bleeding tongue the loremasters of the elf-folk learned many things, things they imprisoned within their books and hid away lest they be tempted by the power of such secrets.

‘What is hidden may be found. A magician of the elf-folk when casting the most minor of spells, felt the touch of Tzeentch upon his spirit. He was destroyed by the unleashed might of his magic, and with him many chambers and halls were ravaged. In that destruction, things that had been hidden escaped into the light to be found once more. One of the elf loremasters discovered again the knowledge of the long-dead magus and this time it was not hidden from the elf-folk the meaning of the sorcerer's words.’

‘The Changer moves our enemies,’ Tchar'zaneke intoned. ‘The decadent elves of Ulthuan seek alliance with the unbeliever southlanders that together they might bear the holy weapon into the lands of the true gods. They seek the Bastion Stair, the gateway into the realm of Khorne. They think to cut off the Winds of Chaos by using the weapon to destroy the portal between worlds.’ The warlord clenched his fist, knuckles cracking as his fingers curled against his scaly palm. ‘This I will not allow.’

‘But how can they know how to find the Bastion Stair?’ Urbaal dared to ask his warlord. The Bastion Stair was even more of a myth to the people of the northern tribes than the Inevitable City. The gate between the world of men and that of the Blood God, it was a place from which no man had ever returned. If it existed at all.

‘The Bastion Stair is a deceit made real,’ the sorcerer explained. ‘A dream given substance, a phantasm become physical. It does not exist as

we exist, but extends in the spaces between the mortal and the eternal. It is different things at different times, moved by the murderous whims of the Blood God...'

'But solid enough now to serve the will of Tzeentch,' Tchar'zanek growled. 'My scouts have found the Bastion Stair, I have moved an entire warherd of the beastfolk to wrest it from the debased followers of Khorne. We shall await the coming of the elves and their allies. When they bring the weapon, we shall take it from them. We shall use it to cut asunder the gate between worlds and unleash the Lord of Change!'

'Too long has mighty Kakra the Timeless been the prisoner of Var'Ithrok the Skull Lord!' the sorcerer shouted. 'Chained within the Portal of Rage, his immortal power bound to the petty schemes of the Blood God! The Spear will end Kakra's enslavement. It will shatter the chains that bind him, will remove the hold of the Blood God upon the Portal of Rage! The gate between worlds will be restored to the dominion of the Raven God!'

'The Winds of Chaos shall sweep over the Raven Host,' the sorcerer cackled. 'They shall fuel our spells and call down legions of daemons upon our foes! Nothing shall stand against the glory of Prince Tchar'zanek! All the world shall bow before his might!' The sorcerer's glare focused on Vakaan, then turned towards Urbaal. 'It is a sacred honour for such lowly creatures to be the instruments of Tchar'zanek's triumph.'

Urbaal felt a cold hate seep into his heart as he heard the sorcerer's sneering words. He took a step towards the robed magus. 'Yet we were chosen.'

The sorcerer gave a reluctant bow of his head. 'There was a page... a page of this tome, the Mirror of Eternity that related to the prophecy. To unleash the might of Change, to break the chains that bind it, would take those chosen by the Raven God. We... I could not find this page...

with the last of the prophecy. Great Lord Tchar'zanek sent the beastfolk to secure the Bastion Stair, to prepare the way for his champions. Then... then the page upon which were written your names returned to us, crawling across the floor like a living thing to rejoin itself to the book!'

'Others seek the weapon,' Tchar'zanek told Urbaal. 'Do not make the mistake of assuming shared enemies mean shared purposes. Use such tools as Tzeentch presents them, but never trust them.'

'Anything that stands against the might of Tchar'zanek will feed its soul to my sword,' Urbaal replied. A hungry moan of eagerness rasped from the blade sheathed at his side, a spectral note of unearthly bloodlust.

'You are marked for great things, Urbaal,' Tchar'zanek warned. 'The finger of destiny points at you this day. Do not fail the Raven God. Do not fail me. There is nowhere in this world or the next you can hide if you do.'

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