

A WARPSTONE PUBLICATION

BLOOD HUNT

A SHORT STORY BASED ON DEATH'S DARK SHADOW
(Part II - Hunter trilogy)
by François Dubé



*It takes years to become a man
It takes one sin to become a beast
Anonymous*

This scenario is the first of two sequels to Treasure Hunt, originally published in Warpstone 22.

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It lasted less than a second but the horde felt it. Like beasts sensing the storm to come they reared and shivered with fear, instinctively taking their weapons and raising their shield. Brarak felt it too. More, he saw it. Far, West, the sky darkened and a dark lightning fell. Brarak was used to seeing this kind of change in the winds of magic, more and more often it seemed, especially near the great cities of men. In the mountains, it happened less often.

He looked again at the horde, an army of stubborn beasts that obeys only the strongest. Brarak raised his staff silencing the pack. Then he turned to the mountain settlement, ready to send his army spilling more blood for his Lord. At that moment the thunder came. It lasted a few seconds then vanished as it came.

The thunder was still in his ears like blood on a white skin. He lowered his staff. The villagers would live another day. Brarak needed to see his Lord to understand this omen and for this he needed to keep his power.



Brarak was gifted. From birth, he could see the world through the winds of magic as others would see the world from the light of the sun. Soon he was able to let his soul travel with the winds into the Realm of Chaos. This is where he met his Lord and was gifted the power to use the winds of magic to warp spell components into devastating power.

His access to the leadership of his tribe was typical. He killed the leader and those who though could beat him. Now, even the strongest Beastmen of his tribe would never dare to challenge him, fearing that even in his death the old Shaman would come back to give them slow and painful death.

When he reached the cave, Brarak prepared the powerful potion that would help him to leave this world. Then he drank it until he fell to the ground and entered a trance. Somehow his spirit found his way and was overwhelmed by the power of his Lord.

“Brarak! Hear my words! You will take your minions to this place, men call ‘The Vault’, where the rivers split. A man will come. He will be like a shadow among the shadows. I chose this man to be my blade. I chose him to be your master and you will be his army”
“Lord. Gors thirsty. Gors want mountain men blood and skulls. Gors want all men dead.”

The shaman felt pain in his soul and his mind came close to being torn apart by the anger of his lord.

“I said, take your minion to the Vaults.”

“Yes! Yes! My Lord.”

The pain eased but the fear remained.

“Shaman!”

“Yes, my Lord.”

“You will find this man and give him power.”

“Yes, my Lord.”

“You will find this man and make him my blade in this world.”

“Yes, my Lord.”

“But first...”

“Yes, my Lord?”

“Burn the town. Let no one escape.”

As the Shaman’s spirit drifted back to his cave, in the maelstrom, something that could be thought as a laugh filed time and space.



Brarak did not see him at first. Then he was there, in the middle of them. Brarak ordered his beasts to kill him. Four rushed to the man but were pushed back by a dark magic. Then it all became steel and blood, a whirlwind of blood and death.

Brarak ordered his beasts to stop. He had seen enough. He knew the man was the champion sent to him by his Lord.

“I knew you’d come, said Brarak.”

“I knew you’d come, said the man.”

“You are strong.”

“My thirst makes me strong.”

“Soon you’ll be stronger.”

“Soon you’ll know what it is to swim rivers of blood.”

And this is how the Silent Blade of Khorne took his place among Brarak’s Beastmen army. He did not try to lead the horde. He did not try to take the rightful place of Brarak and control things he could not. Still he was Brarak’s chief because their Lord said so.

“I can shape you, said Brarak’s unearthly voice later when they were alone in Brarak’s cave. I can give you more arms, claws, horns. I can give you legs that will make you the fastest man on earth. I can make you an armour that only the most powerful magic will pierce.”

Roderick felt the offer of power and all the obvious destructive strength it would give him. Roderick felt he could destroy the world and quench his thirst. But Roderick had other plans.

“Our Lord had blessed you, Brarak.” Said the Blade. “Yet I don’t need those. Not now! What I need is more magic. More ways to speak with you from far away. I need to be one with you when I need it.”

Brarak’s mind was overwhelmed by the power the champion recognised in him. Brarak’s mind wanted to please the champion and give him the power he wanted.

“That will be difficult, said the Shaman.”

“But you will do it.”

“I will do it.”

“You will find ways to let go your magic through me.”

“I will find a way.”

“Good.”

The fires and burning herbs gave to the cave the twisted shape of hell on earth. The champion let go time and space and felt a growing sense of communion with the darkest powers of this world. He felt that all he wanted was coming together and that soon he would be ready to unleash death and to make rivers run red.

“Shaman!”

“Yes.”

“I need you.”

“I need you too, came to the mouth of the old shaman.”

“I need my wounds to heal by themselves. I need my body to feel no pain. I need my blood to be one with me and never leave me. I need my arms to be strong and deadly. I need my eyes to see through shadows. I need my legs to spring like a beast but yet look human. I need one eye, that can’t be seen, behind my neck.”

The shaman smiled.

“I can give you all that, champion. He paused to add. As you prove your value.”

“Good, said the champion.”

The winds of magic seemed to react to the unearthly bargain taking place. The shaman felt something he have never felt before: real happiness. Then the champion broke the silence.

“We start tomorrow.”



As soon as he entered the town of Kreutzhofen, Adolphus knew it was time the witch-hunt came to cleanse the Chaos within. Not that the town showed any obvious sign of worship of the forbidden ones, but from the look people had in their face he knew it was a nest of hidden agendas and twisted plots.

Kreutzhofen was a small town without city walls and watchtowers. It seemed for the old Witch Hunter that the latest Orc invasion had not brought wisdom with it. In fact, despite the strategic location of Kreutzhofen at the border of Bretonnia, Telea and the Border Princes, it seemed that the city had developed with an amazing feeling of safety. Adolphus knew better. He knew that this world was being watched by unearthly powers and that Sigmar had chosen him to find and kill those who worship them.

The watch captain and the Dorfrichter met Adolphus in front of the Helmsman inn. The watch captain Hugo Becker appeared like a man with more time to cut clean his moustache than a man fighting Goblins daily. The Dorfrichter, a man appointed by the Count of Wissenland to look after the running of the village, looked more like a scholar. His bodyguard looked like all bodyguards. He was a huge Ogre of a man with more muscles than brain.

Nothing to prevent chaos from settling and spreading, thought the Witch Hunter.

Again, Adolphus realised the foolishness of mankind. While the world was eroding and threatening to crumble to dust, most men cared only about eating, drinking some other fleeting pleasures. Then Adolphus's mind was back to Kreutzhofen.

"Herr Klippel, I am here on behalf of the Count of Wissenland and our guardian Sigmar to protect you against overwhelming danger."
"Danger! said the Dorfrichter. From Goblins?"

The Witch Hunter smiled then answered.

"From wherever it is." Then he added without a look behind him. "I need a place to stay for my men and me."

Adolphus's men had attracted a small crowd of peasants, ones keeping a fair distance between them and the frightening warband. Adolphus's men were a crazy bunch, mainly composed of men dressed like beggars, whipping their back to cleanse their soul. There was the huge barking war hounds kept at bay by two young Witch Hunters. All that was a fearsome sight for Kreutzhofen's peaceful habitants. In fact the only reassuring sight was the sight of a huge armoured priest riding a massive warhorse and holding a great warhammer.

"Well, there is a house on the western side of the town. It used to be inhabited by a man called Rudolf Furst. But he left Kreutzhofen a few weeks ago for Telea with a group of mercenaries."

"And he won't come back?"

"Hell, well, no. A beast killed him and all the mercenaries."

"A beast?" smiled the Witch Hunter. "Are you talking about some kind of weird monster people talk about after finding the remains of a caravan attacked by goblins?"

The Dorfrichter let go a shy smile and added.

"Well that's what some Tilean traders said. A huge beast. Maybe a dragon."

Adolphus smiled again then looking at Sigismund Klippel straight in the eyes, he said.

"Have you heard of Scharmbeck?"

"Scharmbeck? Yes of course. It is a town farther East near the black mountains. Why?"

"It had been razed to the ground."

"Razed to the ground! Sigmar protects us from goblins!"
"Not from goblins." Said the Witch Hunter. "From Chaos."



Walking nervously from one side of his house to the other, the usually quiet physician was now talking like a young lady.

"But you don't understand. There is a priest of Sigmar, two apprentices and many warhounds with him. And there are those crazy fanatics that will be just happy to burn me at the stakes to cleanse whatever sin they made in their life. I am doomed."

Jakob Entesang was not the same man anymore, a few weeks ago, a ghost had appeared and told him to move away from his experiments. Then his books vanished and he found his creature and laboratory destroyed by some unknown power. And now there was this man, hooded and loaded with throwing knives and other weapons. A man who seemed to know his darkest secrets.

"I had lost the magic items I owned. My creature is dead and I've got nowhere to run."

"You don't need magic items Jakob. In fact, you are best without. You only need me, said the man. Listen to me and you shall live another day."



The forest was quiet and dark. The rain was falling in small drops on the hot soil of the nearby fields creating a crawling mist that snaked his way to the peaceful town houses and farms. The Witch Hunters were waiting. Then a man in dark clothing covered with scars came back and walk directly to Adolphus.

"The doctor has gone to the ruins of the Reichenback's mansion as expected sir."

"Good, said the Witch Hunter."

Adolphus was glad to have Klaus with them. Klaus had been a cunning hunter once, spending many days each week in forests people would fear only to look at. He had lived an happy life hunting, scouting and loving a gorgeous women. It had changed. One day he came back from the forest to find mutilated bodies and heads on spikes. His family and friends were lost and with them all the pleasures he had enjoyed. Now there was Sigmar. Only he could quench the sadness he had to endure every day.

The Witch Hunter captain put a firm hand on Klaus's shoulder and turned towards his men to say.

"Let's move on to the battlefield. We have a chaos worshipper and whatever friends he has to bring to Sigmar's cleansing fire. Let's Sigmar guide our arms to bring justice to this world."

At once the men grabbed their warhammers and crossbows. Many faces lit with the joy of the coming battle, hoping to find more than one heretic to crush between the hammer and anvil of faith.

They moved with efficiency like members of the same body. They stayed in the woods with Kreutzhofen's fields on their right then they crossed the Montdidier Pass trail and moved deeper into the forest.

After a long walk, the ruins of the doomed mansion appeared. The two young Witch Hunters took position on each side of the ruins, each with two fanatics and two war hounds. Then Adolphus, the warrior-priest and the flagellant moved towards the mansion. The hammer and anvil were ready for a night of glory.

Seeing his master entering the mansion, Ernst became worried. He had the strange feeling that something was going wrong without knowing exactly what. They were there to keep anyone from escaping the mansion while their master would investigate the ruins and cleanse the chaos within. A great plan. Still Ernst could not let his eyes stop wandering around him, trying to find danger where only trees stood. Then he heard the sound of an arrow and the howl of one war hound followed by a second arrow that hit the second dog.

“Ambush!” Shouted the young Witch Hunter! He jumped to the other side of the fallen tree they used for cover followed by the two zealots. “Where are they?” He shouted to his men already taking position with their crossbows.”

Then they heard coming from behind the howls of Beastmen, the sound of steel against wooden shields. They turned to face the new enemy and then they understood, but it was too late. The attack came from the direction where the arrows first came. In a few seconds they were laying flat on the ground and soon they regretted that they were not dead yet.



The Chaos champion moved like a shadow among shadows to the ruins of the Reichenback’s mansion. He was as silent as a heartbeat could be but then he felt it. The strange aura of the magical alarm vanished and a shout came followed by deadly bolts. The Chaos champion dived for cover but it was too late. The magical rune activated and pushed back the deadly bolts crushing them by the strength of the defensive magic. Now without shielding power the champion rose and moved his hands near his mouth to whisper words of power.

Meanwhile, during those few seconds, the ruins had changed into a battlefield. Flagellants appeared from behind rumbles and pillars, crossbows were reloaded, prayers to Sigmar were addressed and orders shouted. The outcome was all too evident. The flagellants charged with iron braziers and flails, but then all became a nightmare. Their blows cut through the image of the champion and heads parted from flagellant’s bodies as the champion reappeared at their back. Bolts flew to the new image but the champion was already somewhere else.

“Sigmar protects us!” Whispered the warrior-priest. “Where is he?” Shouted the Witch Hunter captain.

The priest closed his eyes and focussed on the winds of magic until he was able to follow with his hand the running shape of the killing machine.

“There! He shouted, pointing in the direction of a flying knife that ended its flight in the middle of the warrior-priest’s forehead.”

The Witch Hunter captain raced to the last image of the champion but instead of hitting the lure he rolled to the ground and made a wide strike on his right that tore through leather and flesh. The champion fell to the ground in pain, trying to stop his life from draining away.

The Witch Hunter knew he did not have a lot of time and he reached for his duelling pistol only to turn into a ball of fire as flaming globes hit him and set to fire the blessed oil he carried for cleansing chaos.

The champion watched amazed as the globes of fire hit the last fanatics and cleansing the world from a few Sigmar’s blades.

Doctor Entesang moved to the chaos champion and, whispering arcane words, stopped the blood of the chaos champion from draining away. But the pain stayed.

“We got them!” Announced proudly the physician. “I am so glad to know you.”

The chaos champion sat painfully, still feeling the Witch Hunter’s blade on his side.

“You shouldn’t, whispered the champion, as he pierced the physician’s heart with a poisoned dagger.”

“You shouldn’t, whispered again the champion. For my face shall remain unknown and only my legend should give shivers to all who stand between me and my thirst.”

The champion rose to his feet and moved to the darkened shape of Adolphus. Somehow the man was not dead yet.

“Sigmar’s fire killed my father and I shall bring fear to all who worship

Sigmar, said the chaos champion.”

“I do not fear you, whispered painfully the Witch Hunter. Kill me and others will come and get you.”

The chaos champion smiled.

“That’s what I hope, answered the champion. But I’m not going to kill you.”

“What else can you do with me, said with irony the Witch Hunter.”

“I usually prefer to let souls wander eternally searching answers they can’t get. But for you, I’ll give you a hint that will torture your soul until it tears apart.”

“You are mad!”

“Not yet. I have much work to do before that and you are going to help me.”



The ceremony had attracted the entire village. For some the sight of the dead Witch Hunters’ burial was a relief. On the other hand, what killed them was a new source of fear. The words ‘more blood soon’ painted with blood on the walls of the Reichenback’s mansion meant nothing good. They all felt that the monster was lurking somewhere in the shadows looking for more blood to spill.

When the ceremony ended, Kaspar Erdheim the watchman and many other men saddled their horses and blessed by Sigismund Klippel with a request to the Count of Wissenland, they left to get help and Witch Hunters to track the monster lurking over their peaceful town.

At the same time recently arrived boats of traders decided to unload their goods without a stop at the Black Eagle Inn. They’ll work all night if required but they wanted to be away from this town as soon as possible and go back to Alimento or Nuln.

Burnt in his flesh and soul, in the shadows of Kreutzhofen’s graveyard, a wounded mercenary let go teardrops of blood on the ground.

“Dear Ranald. I sinned. I sinned more than anyone sinned. Please give me strength to cleanse my mistake before I die. Let me be fast enough to be there when the blade will strike next. Let me use all my skills and magic to trap this fool creature of chaos that I trained and let none of his worshippers survive.”



Not far away, in the mountains, Brarak was preparing a dark ritual.

“Shall we burn the town now Blade?”

Lying down on the centre of a dark altar, Roderick let go a sly grin.

“Not yet shaman! Let’s enjoy the battlefield for a while. Let’s enjoy our mastery of the playing field! When I’m stronger I will go and none will escape from the Silent Blade of Khorne!”

Roderick let go a dark laugh forgetting the pain the Witch Hunter’s blade had given him.

“Perform the ritual Shaman! Now!”

Somewhere in time and space, three Witch Hunter’s hearts began to beat. Then the Beastman Shaman took two lumps of warpstone in his hands and opened a gate to the unearthly power of the warp.

To be continued...