

The cold gale winds blew through Rognac as he sat on his warhorse, cold to the bone even under layers of Northern furs. Frost bite had completely claimed his face, hands and feet this morning making even the slightest movement painful. This would be his last battle and if he did not die by the enemy's blade then he would perform the ritual of sacrifice and die by his own. It was a disgrace to be a burden on the tribe and a man who could not walk or use his hands would be the worst of burdens. Such were the customs of the North. His squire had taken sinew and tied his sword hand to his sword so it would not fly from his hand and feet were tied into the stir-ups of his steed so that he could balance in the saddle.

His company of 200 men had started out from High Fort three nights past and were quickly set upon by the daemon. Luckily warning spread through the camp and most men were able to muster in small groups to fend off the attack. Out of the 200 able bodied men who left High Fort, now only 25 survived to face the Slayers. Cold, hungry, and delirious from the cold that blew across the white plains, he was able to lead his men to the remains of the ancient temple of Torm at the edge of a small stand of trees. Here in the toppled columns and snow covered mounds of rubble he and his men would take their last breaths and leave this world of men for their fathers feast halls in Valhalla. They would die this day in the frigid waste with no one to sing of their glory as only the lucky or the arrogant died in ways remembered by the bards with their names put to music and poetry to be remembered for generations.

Even now all was not lost as there were whispers on the wind of a survivor of clan Stormhammer. Stories were being told of a girl, now a woman, who had stood in the bloodied snow amongst her dead clan and yelled a war cry which shook the heavy snow from the branches of the northern pines and challenge the will of the gods. Rognac wished to see this fabled woman who would be Thane but alas, wishes could not save a man from certain death this night. Rognac's attention was drawn back to the present as a soldier yelled out in alarm from behind a snow covered column. As swords and spears were made ready, the black shapes of the Slayers could be seen moving through the snow towards their position. The slayers were the fastest of daemon troops and the most deadly with their long arms ending in black blades that were able to sever a horse in half with one fluid motion, their hides were covered in overlapping plates of dull black hide, black as night and strong as steel. As the dark shapes effortlessly flowed into the line of his men, blood sprayed in a shower from the first victims, turning the snow a dark black color in the fading light of the evening sun. Swords and spears were deflected by the daemons hide as they killed at will and waded through the Northmen. The Slayers having impaled men upon their long black blades, did not even try to ride themselves of the corpses but continued the slaughter until the impaled men were simply ripped apart, their torsos flying high into the air to land in the snow. One of the corpses landed at the feet of Rognac's horse, the entrails wrapped around the feet of his steed causing the steed to step uneasily to the left as Rognac tried to control the beast.

It wasn't long until the frigid air carried the smell of blood and death and Rognac found himself alone in the quiet of the waste with five slayers circling his horse in silence, blood dripping from bladed arms and rendered flesh hanging from black teeth, their dull black plated hides glistening with fresh blood. His horse reared up in defiance as the shapes closed in and Rognac felt the piercing pain of the Slayers blade cleave him in half. As his head jerked back he stared at the stars briefly before turning his head to the side to see his horse fall to the ground in three pieces along with his lower body, legs still tied to the saddle. Slowly the darkness came to his vision as he felt his impaled body slide down the slick blade of

the Slayer, held high in the night air. Quickly the pain subsided and the cold vanished from his hands as his flesh was quickly ripped apart. On the wind he could hear the sound of music, smell the scent of roasted game, and feel the heat of the feast hall fire upon his cold skin. Through the slits of his half closed eyes he could make out the light of Valhalla and feel peace enter his soul. As he died one word kept whispering in his mind like a cold winter wind.

“Stormhammer”.