

A WARPSTONE PUBLICATION

CHAOS HUNT

A SHORT STORY IN A WORLD OF CHAOS

(Part III – Hunter trilogy)

by François Dubé



*After years of tracking down the beast, the end was near
And who was the hunter became unclear
Anonymous*

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

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The Watch Captain walked along the bodies trying to figure out what kind of chaos storm erupted in the room and killed a dozen Templars and clerics along with another dozen of servants, scribes and scholars.

"It's the Silent Blade of Khorne", said the watch captain.
"Are you sure?" answered the old priest walking with him, trying to protect his robe from the lakes of blood on the floor.
"Well who else could have done this mess?"
"A major demon?"

The watch captain stopped to think and gave a look to all the room around him.

"No. One hit. One kill. Precise and deadly shots and blows. Demons don't care about doing things fast and clean."
"Clean you said! Have you seen the mess around here? It's all pieces of brain, pieces of legs and mutilated bodies! Mothers will not recognise their son in this butchery."

The captain bent to examine a few bodies and weapons.

"They did that after."
"What?"
"They did that after."
"Who? Who did what? said the puzzled old man."
"The major demons you talked about."
"The major demons?"
"Yes, they smashed all of those poor folks to pieces."
"So I was right! It was not this imaginary chaos champion who did that. The Grand Theogonist will be happy to learn this. This chaos champion legend was beginning to turn him upside down!"
"No. It was the Silent Blade of Khorne who killed them all."

The cleric was puzzled again. The watch captain smiled.

"The demon horde appeared in the room, probably summoned by a powerful artefact brought here by the champion. Then all the templars, clerics and the witch hunter over here..." He paused then pointing to another half of meat and bones ten feet away he added, and there...

The old cleric did not think the joke was funny. He kept a mental note to speak about the watch captain to the Grand Theogonist next time he sees him. Meanwhile the watch captain had begun to walk again while adding details to the assumption he had in mind.

"... so they all focussed their defence on the obvious powerful and ugly monsters while the Blade moved among them poisoning them one by one."
"But the demons probably killed at least some of them."

The watch captain let go a bright smile at the need the old Theologist had of being right.

"Probably, answered the captain with some irony, but does it really matter?"

For once, the cleric kept silent for a few minutes, feeding on his anger to be the second to understand the truth in this entire massacre. A young watchman stopped them from their investigation.

"Captain Dickon! We found four more bodies over there."

Dickon and the cleric moved through the hallways of Sigmar's temple to find the bodies of three temple guards and the body of a young cleric.

"Sigmar! This is young Oldrik!"

The cleric made the sign of the hammer and whispered a small prayer to Sigmar.

"Indeed this young fellow was a great man", said Dickon.

"A great man?"

"Probably the man who gave the chaos champion the hardest time in this doomed massacre."

"Why do you say that?"

"See. Only one hit: clean and sharp, in the middle of his forehead. The champion did not mutilate the body after or have some unearthly creature to do it. To me, it shows some respect."

"Or possibly the killer had no time to do that."

Dickon put his hand on his chin to have a deeper thought about what the cleric had just said. The old cleric was already jumping to another question.

"So what happened?"

Dickon had a second look on the young cleric and followed his assumption.

"The young man probably used some of his knowledge and magic to locate the champion and leaded those men to their doom."
"Or the champion waited for them to find him, said the cleric with irony."

This time, it was the captain who did not think the cleric's joke was funny. Indeed the killer was a cunning beast and Dickon felt the need to draw his sword and ask his men to do the same and surround him with wall of blades. Then he looked at the temple guard's bodies and showed a renewed interest.

"What do we have here?"

The captain looked at a broken sword partly pined into a wall. It was the sword of one of the guards. Following the blood spill, he figured out that the sword was repelled by an amazing strength, had split the guard's head in two and then flied to the wall where it was broken by the strength of the throw. Then he looked at the men's bodies and guessed that they were all killed while struggling to get back on their feet probably pushed down by the same blow that made the sword fly to the wall.

"I have seen this before. The Silent Blade of Khorne wears magical armour that repells weapons."

Dickon was fast on his feet, sword ready, and saw a man dressed in black silk with leather belts running across his chest. The old cleric also saw the man, or the mutant, perhaps with the burnt flesh on a totally destroyed face.

"How does it repel weapons?" said the Captain.

"A powerful rune that comes into action each day when the first blow hits the chaos champion. Of course this one has extra destructive powers, added the man.

"Never heard of that.

"A guy named Geatano Carnera wore one of those more than 500 years ago, explained the mutant.

"Who are you?"

"Not important, only remember the armour in case the Blade reappears in two years.

In two years?"

"His job in Altdorf is over, the Blade is already on his way to the World's Edge Mountains.

Dickon had many other questions to ask, but, as he motioned his men to surround the mutant, the dark man vanished in a mist of colours.

"Have the entire temple on alert!" Said the captain to the watchmen. "I want this man. I have more questions to ask. Be careful, he might be the killer!" Ordered the captain.

The old cleric was smiling.

"He is already gone, said the cleric.

"Gone."

"Yes captain. You see, he started to move away moments before he began to talk to you. A simple trick well used."

"A simple trick?"

"A simple trick. I don't know by what mystery a mutant can become a priest of Ranald, but that's what we had in front of us : a master thief and master of illusions blessed by Ranald himself, probably the Silent Blade you talked about."

The cleric looked proud and overwhelmed by the joy of having taught something to the ironic watch captain.

"Aren't those clerics ordered not to kill anyone except in self-defence? asked the captain remembering past investigations."

"Hum, well, yes, still..."

"Then he is not the killer and probably not a mutant neither. He looked like a man who survived a fire."

"A fire?"

"In my job, I've seen many people burnt from head to toes and this man looked like a living survivor of a huge blaze."

"What can we do?"

"Probably nothing. The man is probably on his way to the World's Edge Mountains."

"What? Replied the cleric again puzzled."

"A feeling only a feeling."

An out of breath watchman came running towards the captain.

"The entire temple is on alert Captain. Nobody can escape."

"Good", said the captain thinking "Let the young men learn that in this world there are things that you can never stop from escaping."



Four heavy built mercenaries surrounded a man. They charged and in less than a minute it was all over. The four men were down. The practice was over.

"Good Roderick. Good."

The mercenary captain moved away from the training square to dry sweat from his head. A small man all dressed in black silk, belts and daggers walk to him, smiling.

"Good Roderick. Good."

"Good, but? Answered Roderick with some impatience in his voice."

Emilio smiled then added.

"Well, it is not that you aren't a good fighter."

"But?"

"Well, it's hard to explain."

"Emilio, speak your mind or move away to get some more wine!"

Emilio smiled again.

"Well, you could be better."

"Better?"

"Yes, much better."

"Much better? Said the captain with irony."

"Well, you've beaten some fine men but I know a few guys down in Miragliano who would kill you before you have time to know that they were only one."

"Really?"

"Really."

"Emilio, bastard, speak your mind or I'll kick your ass so hard you'll no longer have one."

Emilio took a few seconds to feel the impact of the words he was going to say.

"You are too fair."

"Too fair?"

"Too fair. Emilio paused then continued. You fight by the rules. Some would take that as a weakness."

"And?"

"They'll kill you."

"They'll kill me?"

"If they are hired to do so."

"They'll probably use some of your poison or some insane magic."

"So?"

Emilio, let his captain reach his own conclusion then continued.

"When you have decided to kill a man, there is no rule or road that will cleanse your sin. Your sin is in the outcome not on the path you decide to follow."

"But yourself, you kill only in self-defence."

"That's my problem."

"And what is mine?"

Emilio walked away, then turned and said.

"It is up to you to decide."



The man let the image vanished, slowly, painfully, from his mind. His eyes were dry as dust in mid summer days. Dressed as a pilgrim he walked through the great arches of Sigmar's temple in the shadow of the Dwarf stronghold of Karak-A-Karak.

The Dwarfs were no fools. The sight of a man with a hiking stick walking alone in the heart of the world's edge mountains at the beginning of winter meant only one thing : the man they faced was a supernatural power that should not be underestimated.

"Stop here manling or you're dead, shouted a fierce handgunner."

"You haven't killed me yet. You won't kill me now, said the cleric."

"Who are you manling! And don't tell me lies."

"I am a cleric."

"A cleric! Laughed the handgunner. And why are you here?"

"To bring you luck."

"Don't talk in riddles man or you'll soon have fewer teeth to tell your lies. But first, remove your clothes and don't try to fool me. I've seen abominations in this world and I can recognise a fool when I see one."

The pilgrim removed his travelling cape and winter coat and underneath appeared black silk, belts and throwing knives.

"Ah! Ah! Said the Dwarf. We've got you!"

"You've got no one. I come in peace and willingly will give you my weapons until you give them back to me."

"His rings and anything he wears, said a human cleric. This man is loaded with magic items like you never see in this empire. A mutant and a thief, that's what he is."

"A priest of Ranald, replied the man still stripping."

"A thief! That's what I said, replied the cleric. You fools call yourselves priests but you don't have temples, you don't have monasteries, you don't wear robes and don't teach the crowd how to behave in this world. You live in the streets like beggars only to bug us by stealing our most valuable relics! If at least you could help us fighting against what's evil in this world. But no! You follow your lazy path obeying to no one but your thirst of wealth, wine and women."

"That's me. Except that most of what you said is wrong. You described the image of me not what I am. Illusions lured you brother."

The cleric was angered by the confidence and irony in the thief's words.

"But it is true that I love women and wine. And beer too. Added the thief after a second of silence."

The cleric was on his way to get very mad but the Dwarf beside him was beginning to like the man.

"Well naked like he is now he won't do much harm. Only Dwarfs are dangerous when naked, said the Dwarf with a sly smile."

The thief laughed at the joke and soon all the Dwarfs in the room did the same. Only the Cleric stood silently.



Sigmar's temple outside the stronghold of Karak-A-Karak, was a new addition to the Dwarf kingdom. The High King of the Dwarfs built outside Karak-A-Karak so that his human allies could come and visit this Holy Place built for the worship of their god. Few men lived there: a few clerics, a few Templars and a few scholars and diplomats. The Dwarfs had to provide a few soldiers and workers to help the men keep the place clean and glorious. This was not without purpose since it allowed the High King to have a few spies in the temple to keep him informed of his allies intent, just in case.

The Dwarfs brought the pilgrim to Sigmar's High Priest. While the Dwarf would have considered funny to bring the man naked to the High Priest, Roeland, his apprentice, requested that he wore a rough robe made of wool. But once in the High Priest's hall, the High Priest ordered the man to strip again.

The High Priest had a long look over the man. As he expected, the man was covered from head to toe by burnt flesh. He had an 'x' mark on his heart and the high priest could definitively feel that the man had spell casting powers.

"Who are you? said the High Priest."

"I am Emilio Forzani, your highness! A priest of Ranald who came here to warn you about a great danger."

"A great danger, really? Said the High Priest."

"A Chaos Champion will come to you. He will come to kill you and all of those living in this temple."

"A chaos champion? "

He calls himself 'The Silent Blade of Khorne'. He hates Sigmar's church more than anything else. He will come to destroy your church."

"You seem to know him well..."

"I trained him."

"You trained him?"

"Yes, when I was younger. I did not notice the chaos and anger growing inside him. It is my mistake. I am here to cleanse my mistake."

"And how come this man hates us so much to risk his life and soul to destroy us?"

The pilgrim paused to find the proper words.

"You killed his father."

"I killed his father?"

"Well, not you. Witch hunters from the Church of Sigmar."

"Interesting. Very interesting. I have no doubt about what you said being true but, you see, we received a letter from the Grand Theogonist himself. It says that you are likely to be the killer of more than a hundred templars, clerics, initiates and witch hunters. It also says that if you are not, well you know things that will help us to catch this chaos lover."

The pilgrim showed a look of panic, replying:

"You are wrong! You don't know the Blade. You don't know how he fights. You are in great danger. I am here to protect you."

"Maybe yes. Maybe not. Well I have my orders. Templars! Seize this man and bring him to the dungeon. We will bring him back to Altdorf next spring."

"But you don't understand!" Shouted the pilgrim. "The Blade will come to kill you."

The Dwarfs were all puzzled by what was happening near their capital. For most of them human politics and mind was a mystery. The High

Priest and his apprentice exchanged a knowing smile. All was working as planned.



"Valaya! Those men are crazy! Travelling in the mountains during winter!"

"Yes, they are." Whispered the cleric. And for himself he added, "and they are the core of our armies."

The handgunner let his eyes follow the men walking through the arches of Sigmar's temple. All of them fell on their knees, many hitting hard their head on the stone floor, others whipping their back to cleanse their soul before entering the temple, still on their knees.

"Holy steam! These are crazier than most of our slayers!"

The cleric moved in front of the group of pilgrims and blessed them. Then he began a litany to Sigmar repeated with an incomprehensible growl by the crowd. It is then that the handgunner noticed that many men did not even wear boots! He also noticed that many of them had self-inflicted wounds and many had the skin burnt by holding long huge smoky iron braziers. He began to regret that they had jailed the poor cleric. Sure he looked like a powerful wizard of some kind and the Dwarf hated wizards. Still, with this man, he could have drank beer and, he was sure, exchanged tales of high adventures.

"With all the magic items he had, this guy surely had many exciting tales of treasure hunts!" Thought the Dwarf while motioning to his fellow handgunners to let it go."

"Let the pilgrims pass! Who am I to stop those human clerics to eat dinners with a bunch of fools."



Weeks had passed and the Dwarf jailer was happy. Soon it would be summer time and he'll be walking with his brother in the mountains, tracking goblins and trolls. Grinnir knew that, unlike most Dwarfs, his job was of no interest for him and he lived for the pleasure of the hunting season!

"See he said to his prisoner. This is a mountain flower. Soon it will be summer and they'll lead you back to the Empire where you'll be judged and probably be burnt at the stakes."

"But they have no proof that I did anything wrong! Shouted the prisoner."

"I don't think they care."

"I know the Silent Blade of Khorne! I trained him when I was young!"

"So you're a chaos worshipper yourself!"

"No! Shouted the prisoner. It was a mistake! I am here to cleanse my mistake!"

"Well you'll tell that to the witch hunters."

"I want to talk to the High Priest! I did nothing wrong!"

"I don't think he wants to see you. In fact, I don't think that they even remember that you are here!"

The prisoner let go a face of despair and went back to one corner of his cell. There, he sat, totally destroyed. The Dwarf smiled. The prisoner's fate was not his problem. His work was to guard the man. That's all. In his jail, the prisoner seized a stone, handled it up side down and began talking to it, whispering softly to it like a father to his young son.

"What the hell are you doing said the Dwarf!"

"It's a piece of Gromirl, said the prisoner."

"Gromirl? Said the Dwarf."

"Yes Gromirl, do you want to have a look? said the prisoner."

Skilfully he threw the stone through the door window bars and the Dwarf caught it.

"Yes, indeed, said the Dwarf. It looks like Gromirl. Ouch, this stone is sharp said the Dwarf laughing."

A drop of blood fell to the ground. The prisoner whispered a prayer and soon another drop fell to the floor. Then another one. The Dwarf was

puzzled by this little mark on his hand and the blood that fell to the floor. The flesh tore a little bit more and the Dwarf found it funny to see this strange phenomena he had never seen. Then the blood began to cover part of his hand and the Dwarf became nervous and tried to stop the blood from flowing but he could not. The blood was leaking more and more. He drew an handkerchief to quench the flow. Blood was spilling to his feet, flowing underneath the prison door. Soon the poor Dwarf was holding his injured hand in pain while his life was draining away from him.

The prisoner started a new prayer, pressing his hand on the blood that flowed under the prison door. Somewhere in the mountains, the vision of a cave came, arcane words were heard; words that said: "Here my voice hell riders! Come to me! Your time has come." The voice stopped then added 'And bring me some real weapons.'



In the Feasting Hall, Sigmar's priests, Templars and their Dwarf allies enjoyed large pieces of meat and good ale. In one corner of the room, sitting on the floor, pilgrims were feasting on a piece of bread and mountain water.

"Those men are really crazy! We offered them ale and meat! And they wanted flour! Each day, those crazy fools crawl to the nearby mountains to get bags of snow and melt them to get water 'from the mountains where Sigmar walked' had said the handgunner to the High King."

"I've seen those men in battle, had said one of the High King hammerers. They are not Dwarfs but in battle you always feel lucky to have them on your side. Those men are tough and they know no fear."

"Let's keep a close watch on them, had said the High King. They are the guests of our guests and so they are welcome to Sigmar's temple." And he added. "But only there."

The king had paused, then had asked:

"What about the magic weapons the mutant brought with him? Did you get any chance to investigate them deeper?"

The handgunner had bent low and had said :

"I am deeply sorry my Lord, the clerics keep them under close watch and they did not use any of the closed room we offered them. I fear they know about the secret passages. They let no-one of us look at them claiming many are cursed."

The handgunner paused then continued.

"But I noticed an amulet sir with a rune. It appeared to be a master rune of parrying. I asked a scholar to research for me who could have forged this amulet and he found a reference to a runesmith who lived in Karak Izor. He said it might be an amulet, referred in the book of grudge, as one of the treasures stolen by Tilean thieves five hundred years ago. The scholar has a great interest on the subject and is working full time to get us more information. He said he'll be able to give us a full report in five years."

"Good, said the High King. I will soon grant a meeting to the High Priest of Sigmar and present our claims on the stolen items. We might not get them soon but at least I will make sure that the items stay in the Shadow of Karak-A-Karak until we prove our claim."

Borin was glad that the High King was satisfied, but he was not. He wanted to have another look at the items. So he took a barrel of ale and a piece of meat and left the hall for the treasure room. He knew there was a templar on guard with whom he shared many evenings drinking and story telling. Perhaps he could be allowed only to look at the weapons.

As soon as the double door of the Feasting Hall was behind him, Borin had a strange feeling that something was going wrong and he yelled to

the watchmen on duty. Half a dozen stumpy warriors appeared and he ordered them to walk with him. He had another look at the pillars and at the many doors surrounding the wide entrance hallway then moved to the other side of the temple. His feelings were confirmed. As soon as he entered the 'treasure room', that was in fact the hallway to the clerics and templars rooms, he saw the mutilated bodies and open treasure chests. He shouted for the watchmen to take cover! But his voice muted by an amazing sound of steel and beast howls.

"We heard nothing, said a guilty watchman."

Borin was mad and knew that something big was happening and that not many would be alive the next day to tell it.

"Forget it Harok, they used magic to silence their actions, we are under attack by unearthly powers."

Borin raised his axe! One rune no longer glowed.

"Weapons ready, mighty Dwarfs, we are under attack!"

And they rushed back to the temple's centre hallway that was now occupied by beastmen and flying beasts. The double door leading to the Feasting Hall was now fully opened and a massacre was under way.

"Skirmish! Shouted the Dwarf and they all ran in different directions taking cover behind pillars and statues just in time to avoid a blast of swirling energy!"

"Get the shaman first!" shouted Borin.

The handgunners fired all at once and despite the charging mass of beastmen many shots passed through fur and shields to hit the shaman. Borin was desperately trying to get hold of a runic device he wore as a necklace. Then he struggled with the complex code that would activate the temple's defence runes hidden in the hallway. Already the beasts were hitting hard on the handgunners who were now holding their position, axes in their hands.

Then it all became a whirlwind of fire and smoke. Explosive devices activated and half of the temple collapsed on to the shaman and beastmen smashing flying demons and stinking beasts to the ground at the same time.

Borin survived the storm and dust was still in the air when he started running up the stairs with faithful friends to the get to the Feasting Hall.

In the Feasting Hall, the dinner was over. A terrible battle had raged under the arched ceiling. Walls and tables and chairs were covered with blood. Mutilated bodies were everywhere. Borin was glad to see many beast bodies on the floor and demon's flesh rotting away, freeing the world of their foul smell.

Then he heard the warning. One Dwarf jumped in front of Borin giving his life to protect his chief. A red abomination was now standing a few feet away from Borin. The Dwarf had seen worst in his long life and charged the beast without another thought.

The beast was strong but Borin knew he could kill it. Then he felt a sharp pain on his neck and time slowed down. He saw a blur running in the room giving skilful blows and throwing poisoned daggers at all left standing. Borin saw his last men fell to the ground and the beast had an evil grin raising his sword to end Borin's long life.

Then a snaring mist surrounded the bloodletter, quickly changing into snakes. The Dwarf took his chance to roll to one side and, recovering his axe, he reversed his motion hitting the demon on the back, breaking him in two. The demon fell and melted into blood.

The chaos champion, running through the Feasting Hall, became suddenly aware of a growing danger and whispered words of power to protect him. Then dark energy surged from the chaos champion and a poi-

soned dagger loaded with runes was pushed back on the temple's wall broken in two by the strength of the amulet's shielding power.

"You missed your shot Emilio!"

The dark shape of the cleric, dressed as a pilgrim except for a golden bracelet, appeared in the shadow of a pillar.

"I did not."

In the rooms, the winds of magic were in motion filing the room with their dark power.

"So they let you in with your magic weapons" said the champion.

"I hid them in a bag of snow, whispered the cleric his eyes following every step of the champion."

"Clever Emilio. Really clever. I shall remember this next time I strike."

"This was your last time, replied Emilio."

The champion stretched his arms and legs and started playing with his sword like if he had not heard Emilio's last sentence.

"Travelling with flagellants was not a bad idea. With all the scars and self mutilation they bear, your burnt flesh was just part of the scenery." "Suffering is not just scenery Roderick."

The chaos champion smiled.

"I had fun all those years taking your name and taste for mercenary clothing, said the chaos champion. Beside, burnt flesh is a good cover-up for some of the gifts I received."

"The fun is over Roderick!"

"Not yet Emilio, and you know it."

Roderick unsheathed his sword breaker and, casually talking to the cleric, he added.

"You know it is going to be a short duel, Emilio. In fact, it has already begun, said the confident voice of Roderick."

"I know, answered the cleric."

"One hit, one man down."

"Or one beast."

"Or one beast, said Roderick, a twisted fire in his eyes."

He paused then added swiftly.

"Let's move on with this then."

Curiously, none of the men moved. They stayed there, patiently looking at each other. The chaos champion was smiling. The cleric wasn't. The winds of magic went wild and a second later the sound of flesh being torn apart was heard. The men's mirror images vanished. Emilio's body fell to the ground. His head fell a few feet behind. The chaos champion smiled then saw death from behind, felt a blessed blade in his back running through his armour to his heart, soft, loving, like a needle giving its healing.

The chaos champion stood there, frozen in time and space, watching a sky painted with faces of angels and gods. Eternity fled. The winds of magic calmed and started again to whisper their regular yet turbulent and chaotic beating like waves on beaches.

Borin could not move anymore. The poison was taking his toll on him. He might not die but he would not be able to move for days. Then he witnessed something not many would see in this world.

He saw a man, burnt with warfire, twisted by age and guilt standing behind the chaos champion. He saw the man striping the chaos champion from his cape, his rings and from the priceless amulet of parrying. Then he saw the man emptying a skin of blessed oil on the champion's head and saw the cleansing fire sprout from the man's left-hand setting the chaos champion on fire.

Then the man backed up a few feet to fell on his knees, crying over a small rune carved on the floor. No magic was felt around it. Only two lines crossing each other in a blessing of luck.

"Ranald, I sinned, whispered Emilio. I did not kill in self-defence."

The cleric paused, tear drops like blood falling on the floor.

"I give you back the power you gave me."

Suddenly the winds of magic stopped and the temple became, for a second, a peaceful island in the centre of an hurricane.

Time and space stood there for a second eternity. Then a man rose up, walking away from the devastated temple, remembering a bar, somewhere, west, a few thousand miles away. There was a girl there once. A beautiful maid. Luck was on his side. He knew the woman was alive. He could bet on that. In vino veritas. And there was wine over there.

The end.