

The Stories of Oldclaw

The fury

His muscles ached, his back was bleeding.
Yet again the whip licked his ripped flesh.
With a soft squeak he pulled on his chains, frustrated, helpless.
“Work, stupid vermin, work for Naggaroth...”
Slowly the fury grew.

Another day, shackles jingled, the lock closed its beak.
His wounds stung and itched at the same time.
Pleasure and pain finally proving the same.
Red eyes looked at the guard, who smiled and let his whip do the talking.
Slowly the pain became dull and a black place appeared.
“Yes.... yes.... you can.... you can...”
The whip crossed his back again and reality plummeted in.
Although this time the guards stopped only after the body lay motionless.

As he awoke, he was laying on his back, head downwards.
Pain was everywhere, but he learned that this proved something.
He still was alive. He tried to sit up, but this resulted only in falling.
The pains returned, new ones were added.
Then some one with a torch entered.

He saw a great pile, a huge mountain of bones and rotting flesh.
All visible in the mankin's light.
“To the side slave, that piece of vermin is still alive.”
A rage filled his hart and he felt no pain as he pulled a sharp bone from his side.
“Taking a nap I see, trying to smuggle yourself out...”
A sleek form passed in front of the slave's torch.
And he knew the whip would arrive, but he didn't care anymore.
The rage spoke soothing words, as the whip bit his neck.

A squeaking sound filled the pit of death.
The pointy eared guard only produced pink coloured bubbles.
The skaven's face was red from elvenblood, his eyes blazed with fury.
He felt a new freedom.
He would free himself and no one could stop him.

The first guard was skewered by a bone, throat bitten out.
The second was eaten alive, only remembered because he supplied a blade.
The third was still laughing while his head bounced around the guardroom.
Alarms were raised, slaves died on the spot.

He could smell the fresh air, soon he would reach an exit.
As he turned the corner, stars became visible through a round opening.
A silhouette slowly covered the stars of freedom.
“You foul slave, you dare to go outside.
You worm, for this you will die a thousand deaths and...”
The elf was silenced as the blade entered his brain and the skaven his chest.

There he stood outside, free.

Looking at pale skinned warriors rushing for the entrance.
Not wanting to run, only smiling. The voice kept chanting.
"You can... you can... Old... Claw..."

Oldclaw's evening out.

It is raining, the drizzle soaks you to the skin. Nothing moves... except a stealthy looking figure.
A closer examination reveals trembling whiskers.
A little sound is heard and in a flash there appear two mean looking blades in the figures hands. They glisten black in the rain. The dripping water on the blades makes it look like they are weeping.

The figure looks around and then moves across the street towards the shadows. He moves so fast, that a blink of an eye is enough to make you miss him. He then silently moves towards some distant sounds and lights...

"So this is the place-place I heard about," thinks Oldclaw, weapons still ready.
He tries to decipher the writings on the building above the door. The Mankin's writing is strange, but not unreadable: "Twisted Goat".
This ought to be the place anyone could enter and have a good time... "Hhhmm, I smell-smell breeders!"

Slightly distracted, Oldclaw hears the stealthy footsteps almost to late. As he turns, he puts up both blades in defensive stand. Then in a flash he reacts. One is brought in closer as defence, the other already lashing at the unseen enemy. He now sees a caped figure wielding one slim blade, but with such speed and grace it look like two. Blows are dealt and parried over and forth. Both figures start to breath more deeply, but the swordfight continues.

Suddenly the caped figure launches a strike and Oldclaw parries with both blades.
When they part again, Oldclaw's right leg almost gives way. From under the cape comes the figures left hand, holding a bloody stiletto...
Just as Oldclaw wants to react, the cloaked figure speaks: "Your doomed rat! The stiletto was coated with black lotus, you will die within seconds...
A glow appears in Oldclaw's eyes, "That may be-be stranger, but i will be not-not the only one-one. Look at-at you sword hand."
The figure looks at his hand and as if this is the signal... falls to the ground. Oldclaw reaches into one of his pouches and pulls out a small vile. He quickly drinks the antidote.

While searching for valuables, Oldclaw again smiles as he sees the little nick his blade made on the man's finger.
Only Oldclaw's natural resistance makes it possible, to hold out against the poison long enough... to get the antidote in time.
Carrying the fine blade, some coin and a new cloak Oldclaw hasted himself back to his lair. Maybe he will visit that place again, might even wander in.
"Twisted Goat..", he thinks as he disappeares into the rain....

A small fight

It was several nights, after the one were he killed the tall stranger. And yet again Oldclaw was spying at the Mankin's house called the Twisted Goat.
At some time there arrived a group of humans, who talked among themselves before they entered.

Not long after that there was a lot of fighting noises coming from the building.
"Now this is getting interesting-interesting", said Oldclaw to himself. The noises stopped and a group of mankins came running out. They looked scared and... ripe for plundering. As he made himself ready to

follow them, he noticed something else. A large man came out, accompanied by two bound figures. Just before they disappeared, the large man seemed to kiss both figures in the neck. But first things first and Oldclaw proceeded with his plan. He followed the running mankin.

It was getting towards the morning when he reached the group. A human was speaking to the others and he was encouraging them to go back to the Twisted Goat...

"Halt!", sounded from Oldclaw's left. "Make thyself known...OH...By Sigmar, SKAVEN!!!"

The guard had spotted him and while drawing his twin blades, he cursed himself to let a mankin get the better of him... again. Seconds later the human lay in his own entrails.

And the rest of the group found a furious Skaven in their midst.

Almost overcome by the black hunger, Oldclaw fought with all his skills and his known agility. Two of his enemies sank to the ground, after a seemingly slight sword wound. But his opponent's blood effectively thinned the poison on his blades.

So Oldclaw's style switched from wounding to a more effective and direct way of discarding enemies. He killed another mankin by decapitating him. And as he turned to face the last of the remaining mankins, a spear entered his shoulder.

The last human saw his chance and drew a dagger, under while keeping Oldclaw pinned with his spear. Oldclaw had great trouble fending off the mankin's long dagger, when suddenly the mankin's head exploded. The spear gave way and Oldclaw gnarled as he pulled it out.

"Basha-Basha, he dead-dead now, no head-head hihi...", Oldclaw watched his strongest warbandmember pulling his flail from the corpse. He looked at Oldclaw and said, "The rest-rest is coming soon-soon. I did good-good."

"Yes, you did-did, Basha-Basha, yes you did."

As soon as the rest of his band arrived, they looted the dead and moved on.

While Eektrikky was tending his wound, Oldclaw's thoughts went back to the tall strange human who kissed those two bound figures. Surely he would find out the meaning of that, soon...

Do not touch me...

With his shoulder almost healed, Oldclaw was out wandering again. The band was not far behind in a ruined building. He had to think about things...

He was strangely drawn to that human dwelling called the "twisted Goat", but still did not give in to that urge.

While Oldclaw walked around a corner, he saw a figure knelt down in the rubble of an old ruin. He immediately froze and tried to melt into the shadows. The figure did not notice him and continued with his business. Now Oldclaw could take a better look, he could see that it was a mankin dressed in plain robes. He carried a big backpack and was digging with a small shovel in the dirt. Oldclaw also noticed a metal rope at the mankin's side. Could this be one of those metal whips he heard about?

But the strange crossbow lying on the ground, close to the mankin, was definitely more interesting. It looked very old and like it was made from blackened, heavy ornamented, metal.

At that moment, Oldclaw decided he wanted the strangely crafted weapon. He moved closer to the digging mankin, using all the tricks he learned.

Getting closer he heard the mankin speak:

"Yes, I can smell the relics. I am sure it has to be here... the proof!...I am sure to find the proof now!"

Very gently Oldclaw unsheathed his twinblades and moved a little closer again. He was now but a couple a meters away... Oldclaw quickly moved forward, silently. At least, that is what he thought.

The robed mankin turned about like a whirlwind and his whip cracked like a small thunderclap. An excruciating pain in his left hand, made Oldclaw drop one of his blades. But it was too late for the mankin, as the other blade already pierced the human's belly.

Then with a sudden metal sound, Oldclaw's blade was stopped. By the great Horned One, the mankin wore metal armour under his robe. This small surprise was soon followed by another, when the mankin kicked him in...mmmhh.. lets just say in a place it surely hurt very much. Oldclaw flinched, but his training took over. And again his blade tried to cut the mankin, just to be stopped by the armor again. The mankin must be completely covered in metal under those robes. Oldclaw angrily cursed to himself.

They fought some more and were circling each other, as the human threw a small vial on the ground.

A flash, a lot of smoke and a vile stench filled the surroundings.

The smoke cleared and Oldclaw saw the mankin behind a wall, readying his strange crossbow. The skaven knew crossbows were slow, so he charged again. Only to be stopped by 2 bolts, which hit the ground right in front of him. Oldclaw quickly looked around to see the other shooters, but only the mankin was visible.

The robed figure shouted: "Now get along dear fellow, there are a lot more where those came from."

At that moment he used his crossbow again. "Nobody catches Archeonicus, as long as his six-shooter is in his hands..."

Oldclaw dodged the last bolt, but not with great ease, as it grazed his almost healed shoulder. And he vowed himself to seek out that person again.

After he got back his second blade, he walked back to his camp.

Oldclaw hoped they would meet again... soon.

Inside

Before he would go out this evening, Oldclaw made up his mind. This night he would enter the mankin's dwelling. Thus strengthened he made way for the "Twisted Goat".

Soon he arrived in the proximity of the building.

Oldclaw was very careful this time, mostly due to painful experience. Melting with the shadows he moved closer and closer. It must have been over an hour before he reached the building,... undetected.

As he looked inside, through one of the small windows, he saw a lot of mankins. Sometimes someone would stand up and tell something, sat down again and others ordered drinks or food for that one.

He now took the time to study them more carefully. There were a lot of mankin's but others to. Like the small cook who went around the place carrying a pot of some kind. One who spoke a lot, was a mankin dressed very funny and carrying what Oldclaw knew was a duellingsword. Some mankins were lying with their head on the table, either drunk or apathic in some other way.

Then suddenly a mankin cried: "Mouse! "

Oldclaw was startled. Was he discovered, although the mankins called them rats most of the time. Then he saw a young mankin approach the caller and his hart started beating slower again.

Just as a plan arose from his mind, Oldclaw saw someone coming down the stairs. Were his eyes playing tricks on him? No, it was one of the undead! Walking unharmed between the mankins. He seemed to be recognized and was invited to join a group.

Oldclaw removed himself from the Twisted Goat a bit and sat down in the corner of a ruined building.

There were a lot of strange things going on over there and Oldclaw's hope grew he could make it in there...

Oldclaw rose to his feet and noticed some smoke curling around his feet. Slowly a form arose from the mist. Claws took form and a hideous face with fangs... was sliced in two, by one of Oldclaw's twinblades. He had no time for distraction.

The skaven made haste for the entrance, because he feared there were other beings out here. He reached the entrance, opened the door and said:

"My name is Oldclaw and I wish-wish to enter..."

Inside II:

Omikhee had seldom heard such a silence as when the skaven spoke, standing there in the doorway. Although just a skaven, Omikhee could see he was larger than usual. Walking with great care, the skaven entered the Twisted Goat.

Oldclaw felt all the mankins stare at him. He bravely walked forward, towards the bar. "Bartender, the best wine in your house-house." After ordering he looked at the crowd again, feeling they did not quiet grasp the fact a skaven was here, ... yet.

Then the sound of a chair, being pushed back, was heard. A mankin dressed in armor rose to his feet, looked at the skaven and then walked out the door. Now the murmuring started.

"How could he.... what is the world coming to... the odacity.... must do something."

Oldclaw was starting to feel a bit uncomfortable.

Then two figures rose to their feet and disclaimed: "Now you all can see the foul pit you gather in. Even the vile children of the Horned Rat enter here. This place has to be purged..."

One of the mankins drew two pistols and tried to keep the people in check. The other one pulled out a dagger and a crossbowpistol and walked towards Oldclaw. "You will be the first..."

After that, sounds were heard from the outside, like armored men eager to enter. Oldclaw laid his hands on his twinblades, as the men entered.

About 8 men entered the inn, accompanied by two fierce hounds. The mankin who spoke to Oldclaw, aimed his crossbowpistol and was ready to pull the trigger. Oldclaw feared the worst...

Then everything happened at once. The mankin with the two pistols heard a creaking sound from the stairs. This was the undead mankin coming down again, to see what the noises were all about. This shifted, but only a moment, the attention of the mankin aiming at Oldclaw.

Then a thundering sound of a pistol could be heard, the mankin fired at the undead. The hounds and mankins rushed forward, orders were shouted.

A mankin with one arm was screaming. A bloody arm stump, still holding the crossbowpistol, lay on the floor. Though the bolt had driven itself into the bar.

Now it was more or less everybody for themselves. A wining sound made clear one of the hounds met an untimely end. Tilean curses were heard, while a flickering blade held 2 mankins at bay.

Then the door from the kitchen opened and the cook entered. The mankin who fired and the undead, now aimed his second pistol at the halfling.

Oldclaw was in a doubt, his instincts told him to flee, his mind said that at the least he was partly responsible for this mess. The gun fired and Oldclaw did not hesitate anymore. He threw a dagger at the shooter and threw himself between the attacker and his target.

Oldclaw felt a great pain and then everything went black...

It starts.

Voices could be heard, sounding in the distance. Sometimes they were there and sometimes not.

Oldclaw could remember only tiny bits.

"Throw him out...no...help him... kill the vile skaven... stand back... tough bastard... pay room..."

Oldclaw felt like he was climbing out of a dark pit, progressing slowly. And then he opened his eyes.

Oldclaw was lying on a bunk and as he tried to turn around, a searing pain burned in his chest. He looked down, carefully, and saw that he was bandaged. It looked like he was the owner of another scar and one to be proud of. Now only moving his head, he looked around the room. There were more bunks and on two there lay mankins. It looked like they were wounded too.

"You'll live. You are very lucky I was near. Because some in the crowd had different plans with you. But I have to go now, rest and this evening you'll be able to eat again. But be carefully, remember that."

Than the gray dressed mankin turned and left the room.

Well treated and even helped by mankin, this was surely the place Oldclaw had hoped for. All the effort had made him drowsy again and sleep came to the wounded skaven.

It took almost a week before the wound had closed and Oldclaw could move around again. He was not at full strength yet, but the good food had helped him strengthen quickly.

This was the second evening he spent in the main room. He started to recognize the more “eloquent” characters. There was a lot of storytelling here, fighters boasting over old feats and new arrivals telling for no more than food. This could be some nice way of passing the time. Very nice to recuperate between battles...

Still sitting and drinking his ale, Oldclaw saw a flamboyant mankin approach. Just before he was talking to a mankin breeder. What astonished him even more than a breeder being in this place, was that one of the breeder’s companions was a skaven too. The skaven did not look very dangerous, no scars and not as big as Oldclaw.

This was all very interesting.

“So mister Oldpaw, getting better I deduce. Let me buy you another ale.”

“Neek! Oldclaw is the name-name, but the ale makes up for that mistake.”

The mankin introduced himself as Donato something. And although he paid for a lot of ale, he also talked so much that Oldclaw feared for his ears.

Oldclaw concluded that the mankin did a lot of unnecessary fighting and a lot of boasting about those feats. But the wear on his sword hilt, gloves, and clearly often used pistols, did paint a different picture. This mankin had definite warrior written all over him.

He asked himself, why the mankin acted this way. It was a kind of disguise, a disguise you could wear in the open. This Oldclaw had to remember.

Before Oldclaw went upstairs, he said to Donato:

“Tonight I will rest the last time-time and tomorrow I will go out and gather you a nice-nice story. Do not worry, I will-will tone it down. So your feats will not look-look to bleak...”

Oldclaw smiled as he turned. Some mankins shivered at the sight of those big teeth, behind the smile. He went to his bunk.

Ambush:

The door at the Twisted Goat Inn opened and a cloaked figure entered. While outside the snow tried to cover up Mordheim, giving it the deceptive appearance of a clean city. The figure shuddered and some snow fell of his cloak, as he put his hood back. Some customers gasped for breath, a Skaven! Even Omikhee had to look twice before he recognized Oldclaw.

“Ale please, Omikhee!”

Jinx approached the skaven. She remembered him, as he saved Xhil’s life and almost lost his own. But his hairs were showing a lot more gray, then before. And, now she was close, she noticed small circular burns on the skaven’s face.

“Well my brother in arms, how did thee fair in the adventure business?” It was the Tilean duelist who asked this. Donato did remember some boasting not long ago and his face took an expecting look.

“Oh, I’ll have-have a story for you. But first I have to inquire as to your resolve to listen to it.”

The Tilean looked a bit puzzled at the skaven.

“You will notice-notice that I did not escape without being... marked. But a promise is a promise. So, do you remember the strange-strange tale of the crossbow armed sage-sage a while ago...”

Oldclaw reached his warband’s campsite, they still were there. This was definite a blessing from the Horned One. He gathered his troops and told them what happened. Oldclaw left out some “minor” details, so the troops wouldn’t be overstrained in the thinkingdepartment.

As the first thing to do, they set out to find any traces of Darkelves. The story the man at the Inn had told, interested Oldclaw. The Darkelves often carry special weapons, which could be put to good use...

Though only vague descriptions were told by the storyteller, Oldclaw felt he was on the right track. And the second day, they indeed reached the poorly accessible place.

A scouting verminkin, almost right away, discovered a lot of decaying bodies. After hearing this Oldclaw wanted to order the band forward. But then Eektrikky whispered a warning.

“Better call the scouts back, boss. I smell magic, a kind of foul magic...”

Thus ordering his skaven back, Oldclaw took a better look at the corpses. Not only were they decaying, but parts were missing and a skull definitely bore bitemarks.

As soon as Oldclaw realized it had to be some foul ghouls, the first zombie burst through a wall nearby. One of his skaven skewered the thing right away. But the force which animated it, kept it fighting. A spearbrother came to help and none too soon as the zombie seemed to crush the first skaven's skull. The lifeless body sank on the ground.

Oldclaw was yelling commands and his band started acting like a group again. They formed a kind of defensive lance and rushed forward, leaving the hapless warrior behind. Oldclaw guided them towards a dooropening, where he had seen a figure.

A figure wearing old clothes, which once would have been expensive. Stories were told by elders, that undead always obeyed commands from a master, a foul magicuser.

So the skaven burst into the room. Greyfur sank to the floor, an arrow in his chest, Basha-Basha send a zombie tumbling through the room, after crushing one literally into the weathered wooden floor. The new black skaven was facing some kind of mankin. The mankin had a spear and drove into the black skaven's side. Shortly after that, a mankin's head came spinning through the room. Fightingclaws are awfully sharp.

Brokentoof faced a ferocious manlike thing, which carried a gnawed-on bone. The Ghoul!

The ghoul took a daggerstab in the chest, but still managed to pick up Brokentoof and threw him out a window. Eektrikky signaled his rat pack. The flesheater screamed, as he was swarmed by the beasts.

Then Oldclaw's eye fell upon an old looking mankin, carrying a bow and a spear. He could hear, even through the battlesounds, the mankin speaking in some old tongue. It was spoken softly, yet over sounding the battle. This had to be the magicuser. Oldclaw charged, holding his twinblades low.

There was a small flash of light on the mankin's speartip. But the mankin's spear only took off some whiskers and right after that Oldclaw's blades tasted blood. The mankin's head was almost severed and his entrails slowly slithered to the floor.

Oldclaw looked around and saw his troops finish the last zombies. “Basha, basha, basha...”

The losses were extensive, Oldclaw lost three troopers and Greyfur was at the brink of death. Basha-Basha was wounded, but that skaven seemed indestructible.

Thus gathering his thoughts Oldclaw saw a small glitter from the corner of his eye. First he thought it was the nighrunner coming back in.

But a black dressed figure burst into the room and from that moment on every thing gets blurry. Oldclaw sight gets distorted. Figures elongate, or shrink, even disappear. Just barely he could see his skaven go down, one after the other. The black mankin slaughtered them and turned towards Oldclaw. Then the picture turns bloodred... and black.

“Master we are losing him.”

“What is wrong with the machine?”

“It is not only the machine, he... he just seems to disbelieve everything we feed him. And the extraction...”

“That is no excuse, put in more power!”

“Yes, my Lord.”

Oldclaw was in extensive pain, yet realized soon these voices were different. He also felt burning sensations in several places on his head.

“How much is extracted?”, asked the voice, which seemed to be dominant.

“Only a quarter full, my lord. But his life essence will be strong.”

“All right, put it with the others. Tie the creature up and continue tommorownight.” Oldclaw heard someone leave and some constrains were loosed. The blood started flowing again, contributing to his pain, but also pushing him over the threshold. All went black again...

Oldclaw awoke. He was lying in a dungeon, tied up with chains. Some sunlight shun through a small barred window. He was asking himself how he got here and what were those voices talking about? He felt tired, as if he had been in the slavepitts again. His face stung in several places. As he touched them, Oldclaw felt small spots of burned flesh.

Then he heard scratching coming from the barred window and to his astonishment one of the ironbars fell down. With, what seemed a terribly loud noise, the bar hit the stone floor. A skaven's head appeared, which looked a lot like Eektrikky. Silently the skaven climbed in and walked towards Oldclaw.

“What did they do-do to you? Your fur turned more gray-gray and your face-face is burned... But no more talking.”

Eektrikky pulled a small vile from a pouch and pored some liquid over the locks. A small hissing sound and before Oldclaw eyes the locks were disintegrating. Only seconds later he was free. Eektrikky and Greyfur helped Oldclaw through the window.

“But you're not-not wounded”, Oldclaw asked confused. Geryfur looked troubled at his chief, Oldclaw appeared smaller, less muscular. While getting away Eektrikky explained.

We were fighting the flesheater, a mankin and some zombies, when there was a flash. Next we saw our chief just walking towards the mankin in the ragged clothes. You had dropped your weapons and together you disappeared. Only thanks to the trackingskills of our new member, we were able to find this lair.

“Did we take-take many losses?”, Oldclaw asked. Eektrikky told him that the only skaven wounded was the one hit upside the head, by the zombie.

Oldclaw assumed he was hypnotized and thus believing his warband was destroyed. That had to be it. The wizard... And the flash. It had to be a hypnotic spell of some kind. This was not fair. And then there was that ghastly torturemachine he was hooked to. They did something else to him. He had gray pieces of fur now. They had not been there yesterday.

The one who did this to him, would pay. This Oldclaw vowed to himself. His strength only slowly returned as the small group reached the rest of the warband. Although free again and strengthening, it seemed as he missed a part of his former self. Every trooper was there and indeed only one skaven was bandaged.

The sun was already setting, as they approached the lair again. His warband was ready. Oldclaw knew there was a lesson to be learned, and he would be the teacher.

After dispatching some zombies, they entered a big room. It looked a bit like a laboratory, like one Oldclaw had seen some years ago.

In the middle of the room there was a metal table. On the table lay... something. Metal wires were connected to the thing's head. And the wires then again ran to a small box, with knobs and some lights.

But more importantly, the mankin dressed in the expensive old rags, was standing on the other side of the room. He had turned his back to the skaven and was quickly quaffing something down.

Oldclaw rushed forward, but Basha-Basha was faster and already his flail was flying. The mankin turned and all but Basha-Basha stopped and looked. The mankin's skin was tightening, his muscles regrowing and firming. Before Basha-Basha could react, the now much younger mankin, knocked the black skaven's flail away. It flew across the room and disappeared into the shadows. Basha-Basha's weapon was gone.

Though only in the blink of an eye, Basha-Basha's head shot forward and his teeth ripped out the mankin's throat. The wizard sank to the floor.

Oldclaw and Eektrikky examined the thing on the metal table. After probing they concluded it once was human, but only a husk was left. It was much like some undead Eektrikky had seen as he traveled in Araby. They were called mummies, but those had also a lot of bandaging. Then Oldclaw noticed a small vile in the box with the lights.

As he looked at it a screaming face passed over the blue silverish liquid inside. The face almost resembled the one of the husk on the table. And Oldclaw was sure he heard a small scream in the distance...

Eektrikky held aloft the flask the mankin had been drinking of. It still contained a small quantity of the same liquid as in the vile.

Greyfur called his chief and he stood at some planks attached to the other wall. On these planks were several flasks and vials of sorts. All contained the same blue silver liquid and all were labeled. There was one, only about one quarter full, with skaven written on it. Oldclaw reached and took the vile. He did not think twice and drank it all. Immediately his strength returned and his muscles grew. Eektrikky watched with awe, as his leader reformed into his older self. Only his gray fur and the burnscars remained.

"So, drinking my elixir, eh! And killing my best necromancer, I see", a voice said from behind.

Oldclaw and his skaven turned around. And in a dooropening stood a mankin, slender looking and dressed like a mankin's ruler. The only denote was that he was dressed in all black. The mankin took a step forward and looked at Basha-Basha's bloodied face. "I see there are some fools here, who wish to copy me." The flail carrying skaven rushed forward, only to be knocked down by the mankin in black. This happened with such an ease and so quick, it looked as if the mankin was in two places at once. The giggle that followed made Oldclaw's hairs stand up.

Oldclaw ordered his skaven to stand down. "So you did this-this to me!" He also noticed Eektrikky's nod, so his troop understood.

"Yes, but the machine had trouble with processing your essence, you're only skaven."

Oldclaw let the small insult slide and readied himself. Slowly he drew his twinblades.

"Oow, poisoned blades. Now I am really scared.", the black figure returned sarcastically. He smiled and drew a very lean blade. "Come on verminleader, let my rapier touch your hart."

In a flash the rapier shot forward, while the smile on the mankin's face revealed rather large canines. Oldclaw could only block the mankin's attack at the utmost moment and after that he ducked. The mankin in black looked surprised, "So, you already on you knees for me..." Then he noticed that the skaven was smiling and he became aware of a lot of swirling sounds.

The rest of Oldclaw's pack had readied their slings and let go. Almost impossible to dodge a dozen slingstones at close range, but the mankin about managed. Yet he was hit by several and staggered back. That was what Oldclaw hoped for, as he stormed forward. The mankin's rapier blocked the first blade. The second however cleft his hip. As the mankin fell black blood spouted from his hip, but he still kept on fighting. Oldclaw on the other hand knew that the battle was over. Oldclaw ended the lesson...

Later Eektrikky examined the body and remarked that they had to have killed the leader, because it was a vampire. Already Oldclaw walked towards the shelves with the flasks and vials. Then he swung his blade to crush them as he noticed something.

Several moments later a crashing sound of glass marked the end of the elixirs. Before he turned his back, Oldclaw said, "Burn-burn the place."

"So this was an interesting tale, but it was not that scary." the Tilean leaned back in his chair. The skaven looked at him and smiled. A rather disheartening event, as people on the other tables paled.

Oldclaw reached in his pouch and pulled out a vile.

The Tilean looked closer and though he would not swear on it, it looked like there was a screaming face floating in the blue silver liquid.

Rain

Oldclaw was in a rather pesky mood. The rain was poring down, like it did for two consecutive days. They had not found any wyrdstone at all. Basha-Basha was coughing and Eektrikky looked worried at Oldclaw. Not much later some of the other skaven started coughing too. They needed some shelter and they needed it fast.

The rain pounded down, making a background noise, which almost sounded deafening to Oldclaw. Then he saw a ruined house, which still carried part of his roof. He pointed it out to the rest. This did not enliven them a bit, but they at least moved up the pace. As they reached the ruin, Oldclaw and Eektrikky went for taking a peek in the house. After they had left their skaven, who took a defensive position, they entered the house. Except for the damp air, it looked dry. This was good. Oldclaw sniffed, using the old method of detecting, but he did not smell anything out of the ordinary. He dispatched Eektrikky to fetch the others.

As the skaven wizard was gone, Oldclaw looked for a comfortable place to rest. Not but moments later a great crashing sound penetrated the rain. His skaven arrived and while taking cover, they questioned themselves about what happened just now.

Oldclaw stared into the rain and although he was not sure, it looked like there was a new gap in the ruins across the street. Barely visible, but Oldclaw was sure there had been a ruin just moments before.

Eektrikky pulled out the bandstone and immediately a welcomed warmth started to fill the room. One of his most precious items, the bandstone was saturated with warpstone. In this form it could be placed near a fire and with the proper spelluse absorb the fire's warmth. On the wizard's command it was able to emit that warmth when needed, like now.

Oldclaw's attention shifting to getting at ease, he forgot about the building. But only after sitting for a short time, another thunderous sound was heard. It almost sounded like the thunder, which normally comes with this kind of weather. It sounded a bit different and yet, what else could it be? Oldclaw noticed his skaven getting nervous.

Looking outside again, Oldclaw tried to see through the rain. The rain that looked like big strings hanging from the low clouds. Lightning flashed and for only a moment, something was visible against the sky. Oldclaw held his breath. He almost did not believe his own eyes.

In the short moment of clarity he saw something huge. Something Mankinlike, but then thrice as high as any building around here. And it was walking towards them! Again there was a crashing sound and now even the earth trembled. Some skaven were knocked of their feet. This definitely was no thunder and lightning.

Just as the group wanted to rush out, the roof came down with a crashing sound. A large wooden girder came down. Only his reflexes made that Oldclaw was not crushed. Yet the girder grazed his head and as he landed on the floor between falling stones, he positively saw flashy stars from the blow. Lying there, gaining his posture, Oldclaw thought he saw a giant hand coming through the roof.

Oldclaw blinked, to get rid of the pain and regain his proper eyesight. The hand shifted and picked up the Bandstone, which lay beside the unconscious wizard. As the hand disappeared, so did Oldclaw's impaired vision.

His skaven were getting back on their feet, Basha-Basha was shaking Eektrikky. They were about ready to go, when the backside of the ruin was pulverized. Ducking for the pieces of rubble flying around, all the skaven scurried out of the building as fast as they could.

Outside Oldclaw looked back, just able to see a very large foot being raised into the air and vanishing into the rain. He could hear the giant creature walk away and together with the behemoth the rain moved away. The rain decreased and not 10 minutes later stopped completely.

Oldclaw leaned back in his chair and swallowed his ale in one gulp. He held his tankard up and saw Omikhee nod.

He turned to his audience again,

"So if you ever carry wyrdstone and it starts raining better run then hide."

At that moment a thunderclap was heard outside. The lightning lit up the mainroom of the Twisted Goat and gave it all an eerie guise. Rain started to pound the roof of the inn.

Again a thunderous sound was heard and Oldclaw sat upright real quickly. His listeners paled and one even fainted.

Oldclaw smiled, but only from the outside...

Banishment.

Oldclaw was on his way back to camp. Although a lot of things had happened the last time, he never lost track of his mission here. He promised his clanleader to find a suitable place for an outpost here, in Mordheim. That was not that easy as it sounded... then.

Once he thought they had found something appropriate, only to be driven out by two cooperating warbands of those accursed chaoshunters. Those mankin's called themselves servants of Sigmar, but more "popular" are know as witchhunters. We fought hard and lost 2 verminkin. The mankins lost about half of their force but wouldn't give up, almost like as if they were in a fury. Almost like something other then Sigmar drove them...

As Oldclaw reached the camp, al was quiet. Even the guards could not be seen. This triggered Oldclaw's instincts, there was something wrong here. Not long thereafter he discovered there were no guards at all! He asked himself if the camp might been exposed and was attacked. But there were no battlemarks. Carefully he walked towards the main ruin, they used as the camp's center. For a moment Oldclaw thought he heard some whispering. Very stealthy, almost a shadow, Oldclaw entered.

Only to be overwhelmed by assailants. Already expecting a knife in the guts, Oldclaw was rather surprised. Instead of killing him he was put on his feet and stripped of all his weaponry. Oldclaw smiled in his thoughts. He saw his own troops had overwhelmed him. There were a couple of new skaven too, one of them clearly very adept in the ways of magic. Then nearby stood two other newcomers, one clearly a verminkin, the other a huge black skaven. Could it be.... another assassin adept?

The magic user was clearly the leader and he addressed Oldclaw.

"Our clanleader is not pleased-pleased with your progress. If it is even possible to speak of progress."

Oldclaw's muscles tightened, but Eektrikky whispered not to react.

"Normally you would be killed outright, but your past endeavors make you worthy for an... other punishment.

You will fight your successor-successor Shadowfur, just as you are now-now. He will use-use his weapons.

If you win you'll just-just be banished. If you loose"

His skaven let go and Oldclaw took a leisurely stance.

Oldclaw readied himself, he stood just a meter away from the sorcerer. The huge black skaven just appeared behind him, moving towards Oldclaw.

Oldclaw waited for a second, then he saw his chance. Although they stripped al his weapons, even the hidden ones they knew of, every assassin always has an extra. It was only a small blade, small enough to be hidden in his hair. Shadowfur recognized the musculomovements, but the sorcerer was completely surprised. Oldclaw went for the blade. In one movement he slit the magic user's throat and planted it in mouth of Shadowfur. Oldclaw thrusted the blade in so hard, it severed the assassin's spine.

Both skaven sank to the floor. At the same moment a loud clattering was heard. Shadowfur's blade fell to the floor, it almost had slit Oldclaw's belly. Shadowfur had been fast, but not fast enough.

Oldclaw spoke to the remaining verminkin. "Tell our lord-lord, that I will except the banishment. And that the incompetence of his-his underlings is dealt with."

Then he turned around picked up his weapons. He took some supplies and walked towards the entrance.

Eektrikky approached.

"It is our Lord's will, we will obey. But if you ever need the help of the band, just let us know..."

Oldclaw was walking towards the lights, under while keeping his guard up. His thoughts kept circling around the fact he was alone now, no skavenbrother to back him up. Not that this was new to Oldclaw, he made it out of his enslavement with nothing else except his wits and strength. But the comfort of a group is always very reassuring.

So that was why he was walking towards the lights. Oldclaw reached the building en opened the door. There was only but a moment of silence between all the men. Omikhee looked up and recognized him. Oldclaw entered and closed the door of the Twisted Goat Inn.

For a purse full of crowns

It might not have been one of his brightest decisions, but he took no extra money when he left his warband. The little he had left would run out today. So there would be some earning to do today. Oldclaw had some offers... two assassinations and a theft. But they were not the jobs he was looking for. In the end, if nothing better would present itself, he had to be interested in these so called jobs.

Thus pondering, oldclaw emptied his mug. Just as he raised the empty vessel, to signal Omikhee, he bumped with his arm against somebody else.

"What the.... Now look here, there is wine all over me."

As Oldclaw looked up, the mankin turned to face his soiler. Oldclaw saw a hardened warrior, wearing a very sturdy suit of armor. Clearly not someone without means of existence. The face staring back at him showed no real emotion, which struck Oldclaw as kind of peculiar. The least he expected was a gleam of fear in the mankin's eyes.

"So, you rodent, are you going to apologize or what? No, forget it. You do not look like someone who can afford to let a suit of armor cleaned."

As the warrior turned back again, Oldclaw was getting madder. He knew that it was only a minor insult, except it stung in the right place at the right moment.

"What is it worth-worth to you, to be taught a lesson-lesson in conduct, mankin?"

Already geared up and standing, Oldclaw saw the mankin turn again. Other than a cool reply, the conflict seemed not to escalate.

"You're on vermin. I bet 100 GC that you're not able to beat me in battle. You'll wager the same I presume?"

They agreed and both handed over a purse to Xhili, who agreed to safekeeping the money.

People were getting excited now. Not only would they witness a probably great fight, but a fight for 200 GC. That was a huge sum. Those who looked sneaky at Xhili, could see he was accompanied by a rather large warrior. Some might recognize Ser Tachyon, but only the size and blade of the man were enough to ban all thoughts of a quick profit.

Oldclaw followed the mankin outside. It was near sunset he noticed. The mankin positioned himself and so did Oldclaw. The skaven drew his twin blades and looked at the green shine of poison on them. He smiled. Then very calmly, the mankin drew two swords as well. They started circling...

Sounds of clashing metal, groaning and panting could be heard outside the Twisted Goat. Two warriors were fighting a duel. The ominous fight already lasted half an hour. Both had small cuts, although only the skaven seemed to bleed from his wounds.

Oldclaw guessed that the armor, of an obviously well skilled Marienburger, was even better as he thought. He was not able to penetrate it... yet.

Suddenly Oldclaw found a flaw in the mankins defense. The blade penetrated in between the shoulderjoints. Now he only had to wait for the poison to take affect.

Several minutes passed, however the mankin did not look affected. Not only did the poison not seem to work, the mankin's blades started to glow in a soft purple shine.

Oldclaw had to change tactics, especially when the mankin's blade nicked his arm. His arm went numb for a few moments. This was not good at all. Slowly the mankin forced Oldclaw back.

Some cheers were heard from the crowd outside the inn. Only to be silenced when the swords of the Marienburger started to glow more intense. Even more so, when his eyes started to show it too

Oldclaw was fighting for his life now. As he let himself be driven back, Oldclaw thought of a plan. When he reached the wall of the inn, he readied himself. Some of the mankin's blows landed in the plaster. Oldclaw ducked, rolled forward, got on his feet and the turned and hacked. Both an arm and a leg fell on the ground. Oldclaw stood back, heavily breathing.

"That's all? Just plain dismembering me?" The voice of the mankin sounded completely different now, more or less like it came from deep in the earth. The people stumbled back, weapons were drawn.

Before Oldclaw could attack again, the leg as well as the arm had attached themselves again. The creature, this was noticeably no mankin, bowed.

"Although you did not send me from this plane of existence, I consider this a draw. The money is yours. But heath this warning, I will be around again. My master has to be revenged".

As the creature turned, several skeletons appeared. They formed a defensive position around the creature. Slowly they disappeared into the night.

As disturbing this was, Oldclaw's mood took for the better as soon as Xhili put both purses in his hand. He came a bit closer, smiled and whispered,

"You might think, he did notice the iron rings in yours."

Fortuneteller:

The Twisted Goat still buzzed with rumors about the things that went on last night. Mankins were whispering and now and then they took a quick peek at him.

Although it disturbed him too, Oldclaw pretended to endure al this stoical.

The creature, Oldclaw could not make himself call it a mankin, spoke of revenge. It spoke of a master. The skeletons made it clear, that undead were caught up in this. Only on one occasion, in this vile city, Oldclaw had to handle some powerful undead. He remembered slaying the vampire.

First, his warband bombarded bloodsucker with slingstones and subsequently Oldclaw severed his hip. Thus ultimately resulting in the vampire's decapitation. Could it be one of his minions?

Oldclaw always thought that undead groups fell to pieces when their leader, or wizard, were destroyed.

He dug in his memory, to recall al he knew about those foul beings. It was no wraith, he was sure of that, because the being was not that powerful. The rest of the undead which came to mind, were mere names nothing substantial. Although...

He saw the creature reattach his limbs. This meant it could regenerate. Once Eektrikky told him of wightlike creatures, summoned with a special purpose. Mostly that purpose was revenge. What did the old skaven called those unliving again? Oldclaw recalled the name... Revenant. Could the creature be such a Revenant?

"Sorry... uh... Sir, but people told me you had a run-in with a strange undead being yesterday?"

Oldclaw looked up and saw an old mankin breeder, dressed in a thick robe and holding a walking staff.

"People are right-right. But I do not know-know what kind of being it is. Why would this be-be of any concern of you? You do not-not strike me as an able warrior."

The old one sat down and smiled. Not intimidated at al by sitting at the same table as a skaven.

"I'm sorry, but my old bones do not carry my weight that good any more. But as to answer your question. I am called Davi Dallen. My profession, by fate, is soothsayer. Or maybe you like the term fortuneteller better?"

Oldclaw inspected the breeder closely, but all his instincts remained silent. Maybe the old one had the aforementioned powers. It could help.

"So, even if you were able-able to tell the future. What would that help me-me? Or asked the other way-way around, how would that benefit you?"

"My visions come and go, I have no control over them. But for as a reward... a meal would be nice."

"So what visions did you have?", Asked Oldclaw, while ordering dinner for the two of them.

The old mankin breeder told him about a great evil that roamed Mordheim. And the evil pointed towards him. Oldclaw frowned, "That is most... uh... revealing, I must-must say."

Suddenly the old one frose in her chair. Her face paled and the eyes seemed to look into eternity.

"Beware of the red tower...", the old one said and she collapsed on the chair.

Oldclaw could only just prevent the breeder from falling onto the floor of the inn.

This last part sounded more like a premonition. Could this old one be the real thing after all? After a few moments the breeder excused herself and said she had to get home. Oldclaw did rise from his chair, but she told him that no help was necessary.

"The visions are gone now. I hope they are some help to you. Now they are stopped, all is clear again. I can go now."

While turning, to walk towards the door, Oldclaw noticed a small light in her eyes. Almost like the eyes just caught the light of one of the inn's oil lamps. Or maybe he just imagined it.

The door closed. The old mankin breeder was gone. Oldclaw had a lot to think about and ordered another drink. While Omikhee was filling the mug, Oldclaw reached for his rather well filled purse. Only to find his precious moneycontainer missing. A cut in his clothing marked the spot he carried his hard-earned cash normally. He was dumbfounded.

"But who could... that witch!" And Oldclaw rushed outside.

Surprise.

Gently Oldclaw put one foot in front of the other. Using every shadow, every hidingplace.

He even wore his precious silk boots.

Oldclaw would even the score in a few minutes. That old hag would get a lesson. To steal money from Oldclaw, the audacity...

Not even the slightest little pebble moved as Oldclaw moved closer. Now he could see the hidden dwelling of the mankin breeder, the one who robbed him.

Ready to move, Oldclaw prepared to rush over the abandoned street and wanted to sneak into the place. At that moment a skeleton became visible, only for a fraction of a second. Immediately all his instincts went haywire. This was a trap!

This must have been an elaborate scheme to lure him here. The robbery, the very faint trail, all had to be a ruse.

The clattering sounds of small stones touching and Oldclaw swirled around and drew his twinblades. The beast he saw, was not surprised by his sudden movement. It stood there with gleaming red eyes. Oldclaw barely recognized a black wolf, because the beast missed some flesh and half his face was rotted away. Almost at the same time the beast turned from very still to a roving whirlwind and bore down on him. The wolf bit into one of his blades, thus giving itself a grim smile. The other blade struck its front leg and a grave wound remained.

Stepping back, Oldclaw suspected it to be dead, he saw it slowly rise to its feet again. Then it once more exploded into fast moving killing beast.

How could this be, Oldclaw asked himself? The pain alone would drive any being into unconsciousness or death. But instead of receiving the beast's charge, Oldclaw attacked himself.

His first blows were deflected by the cunning monster. But as they passed each other, Oldclaw turned. And with a mighty blow he cut the beast's spine. Although it fell to the ground and was unable to get back to its feet, it still came crawling for swordmaster. A final thrust and the beast lay still.

It seemed long, but the battle must have taken only seconds to conclude. Nothing else stirred. Did the rest of the undead not notice the fight? Oldclaw stayed for a while, he wanted to observe the undead. He suspected them to belong to the revenant-creature he fought several nights ago. So any information would be useful, though losing his life would not be worth it.

Then a familiar smell reached Oldclaw, a smell he remembered from long ago. After that came the sounds of clashing weapons. There had to be someone else who sprung the undead trap. This could be worth investigating. As he came closer to the fighting, the smell also grew stronger. This made Oldclaw move even faster. He reached the scene of the skirmishing.

Oldclaw was very surprised. He saw a skaven, almost sure it was an assassin too, fight several undead. Already a skeleton and a zombie were down. The skillful warrior used a light spear, with a hook opposite of the shaft. And he used it with great skill, as another skeleton was almost obliterated. The remaining undead then did back off. An in expensive armor clad mankin walked into the light... The revenant!

Its deep voice sounded, "You fight well skavenscum, but you're not the one I'm looking for."

"Neek! What do I care who you-you look for. Get out of my way-way".

The skaven struck as fast as lightning, but the revenant was faster. He knocked the skaven more or less across the street. The body of the skaven did not move anymore. Somehow this enraged Oldclaw tremendously, save for his willpower it very nearly went into a fury.

Instead he drew his sling and placed a small vial in it. The sound of the sling made the revenant turn. But the creature could not react anymore and the vial reached its target and burst.

A terrible scream sounded through the streets. The revenant grasped his face and smoke appeared around him. Slowly pieces started to fall of. And while Oldclaw complimented himself for thinking of blessed water, he drew his twinblades. He charged the revenant.

The foul being did not even put up defense and Oldclaw hacked it to pieces... slowly. After that he poured oil on the corpse and set it on fire.

Now it was time to investigate the body of the other skaven. A skaven, who fought very competent. As he reached the place the skaven lay on the ground, a moaning was heard. He was still alive, Oldclaw thought and quickly helped the skaven. There was no blood visible. At that moment Oldclaw stared motionlessly into the skaven's face. Although the words her face would bet better suited.

She was a skaven breeder. Oldclaw was baffled. This was not possible. Yet here in front of his own eyes, a skaven female fought like a real skaven. She was not as "robust" as a normal breeder, and the muscles were definitely well developed.

She regained consciousness and looked Oldclaw in the eye.

"Be warned I will not be an easy-easy target, I am trained in the Eshin ways-ways!"

"Do not worry-worry, Oldclaw will not harm you." Oldclaw's amazement was only growing.

After talking about 10 minutes, they readied themselves to leave. The Skaven female, called herself Sa-Eeta, was still a bit suspicious. But they knew they had to get out of there and two would stand a better chance.

As Oldclaw turned to look at the revenant's remains, he was surprised again. As if that was the theme of this day. The charred remains of the revenant were gone, only the burnmark on the ground testified to what happened. Was this a good sign?

Worried and yet strangely pleased, Oldclaw and Sa-Eeta hurried away.