

Trollslayer

By Bill King

Reviewed by Rev. Garrett Lepper

Ugh! The sacrifices that I must make... Tragic that I must endure such things as "Trollslayer", but if others may avoid inflicting such pain upon themselves I can rest knowing that it was worth enduring. I suppose this is where I had best tell you that I am **extremely** harsh on gaming literature and care little for the vast majority of it. So, if you really enjoy fantasy literature, simply accept the fact that I am extremely demanding when it comes to this "genre"

Trollslayer

The cover says it all "Carnage and Mayhem; in the Grim World of Warhammer: Troll Slayer - a Gotrek and Felix novel by William King". Carnage and mayhem abound, but sadly plot and character is absent. The cover sums it up, A wild looking Gotrek and a grave looking Felix (or maybe its the other way around) devoid of any context, against flames, hacking away at any number of countless foes they are fighting.



The premise of the book is a sham from the start. Felix, truly the Old World's worst Troll Slayer who can't seem to get himself killed and his biographer (apparently to document his continuing shame at being unable to clear his name through an honorable death) rampage through the Old World in zany adventures pausing only to hack and slay one foe after another. Absent is any suspense, or risk of danger, since Gotrek, as well all know is an icon and will not be dying in any adventures right now and that Felix will live to document these tales, for his completed book is cited at the start of every tale.

Before I go any further into the stories, let me reinforce how devoid these characters are of any real personality. We don't know much about them, we don't care what happens to them. There's very little to relate to them with unless your an adolescent boy confused by your powerlessness in a world where you seem anonymous, or you happen to be a sociopath who delights in the dismemberment of one sentient being after another. There, I've said it, the book is devoid of any real tension or character.

Gehmeinnisnacht

This story first appeared in the earlier anthologies. It features yet another mysterious adventure on that dark and haunted night in the Old World. Would you believe it? It would seem that on this night, human cultists and mutants gather to perform foul rituals! Gotrek vanquishes them and a daemon and there's a small tragic moment at the end, a small twist of fate that if you had been paying attention to you would see coming a mile away. Summary: Gotrek goes into a killing frenzy and kills a coven.

Wolf Riders

A journey to the Border Princes. A dark secret. A tragic love affair. Haunted hills. An ancient curse. A dark family secret. Add Gotrek, undead, and a bunch of orcs and goblins and blend into an inedible pap.

The Dark Beneath the World

The "signature" story of the series I would expect, this story has seen print as well. It is in fact inspired by the art on the front of the WFRP book. Sadly, the story is incredibly boring, in which once again Gotrek is denied a fine death while nearly all his companions fall. It is yet another story involving Gotrek tackling another monstrous creature that you will know he will defeat. Tedious.

The Mark of Slaanesh

Just as any typical tv series must have its "comedic" episode where one of the characters acts in an uncharacteristic manner, this story is the "gimmicky" one in the lot. Our favorite psychotic dwarf who hacks and slays with little inhibition takes a lucky slingstone to his head and is rendered a pacifistic idiot, meaning that he acts exactly like himself but minus the psychotic rage and the macho bellowing. This story is a little less polished and unfinished than the others which makes it a bit more intriguing to read, being a bit raw. It seems like more of a rough draft. But you're better off not reading it nonetheless.

Blood and Darkness

This long, meandering story is one of the worst in the book, and I couldn't wait for it to end. Like the story before this one, this is another "gimmick" story stolen from the bad television serials and family films. Its a variation on the "Two Men and a Baby" story, where two gruff men by circumstance become the caretaker of a young child, as usual, a girl to ensure that madcap misunderstandings ensue. This book involves more cultists, of Khorne this time, and yet another dark secret of a character, this time the enemy of Gotrek and Felix is the mother of the girl that Gotrek and Felix are guarding! More dramatic irony piled on top of dramatic irony.

The Mutant Master

More mutants! This book has four times the mutant goodness than all previously published books combined together. Children in danger! A gothic castle overlooking a village! An evil sorcerer terrorizing the village! Treachery! Villainy! And

tragedy! If this story sounds familiar, its a variation on many of the earlier stories in this volume, Gotrek kills things and somewhere buried in the blood bath is some small irony or tragedy intended to convey some greater meaning to the story. Its still not enough to redeem the story.

Ulric's Children

Giant wolves! A snow covered gothic estate! An evil sorcerer plotting treachery! Villainy! And tragedy. If this story sounds familiar...

The stories are bad. They are formulaic. Part of the problem is that there is little suspense in that it is unlikely that ill will befall Gotrek and Felix. Thus it's important to get some sort of tension in the stories, be it internal within one or both of the characters, between the characters, or with other characters in the story. However neither Felix or Gotrek are easy to relate to, bits and elements of their history are introduced, and they go through little emotional stages but these things do not endure for more than a page or a moment and there is little emotional continuity between stories. If the characters were less than caricatures and had dynamic internal lives the stories would be more gripping. If the stories were told in an interesting or experimental manner, they would be more enjoyable as well. But instead...

...each story begins, usually at an inn, where some little piece of important information is dropped. Maybe mutants were encountered even before the inn, or they appear after. Some evil is discovered behind the mischief, the story drags on as Gotrek kills and kills again, the story culminates into a large slaughter and the little piece of important information provided at the inn proves to be a key element in revealing the a) treachery b) tragedy c) irony or d) all of the aforementioned in the story to ensure that we get the point that it is a "grim world".

Never one to criticize without saying one good thing - despite his care or attention to a) plot b) atmosphere c) character, the author still manages to provide a bit of detail. Each story reveals something more about the Warhammer world, even if it doesn't break out of its formula or introduce us to anything new about the characters. A casual reading of the book will come up with all sorts of little details that can be used to add flourish to the WFRP world.

All in all, this book is a disappointment. Avoid unless desperate for something to read, such as being incarcerated or stranded on a deserted island.

Stun Factor 4 of 10