

The logo for Warhammer Age of Sigmar, featuring the word "WARHAMMER" in large, gold, serif letters with a blue background, and "AGE OF SIGMAR" in smaller, gold, serif letters below it. The text is set within a gold, ornate frame with pointed ends and a central arrowhead-like shape.

WARHAMMER
AGE OF SIGMAR

BROKEN REALMS

KUNNIN'

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Squishy, stinking swamps. How Krugrump hated them. But this was the way the Mawpath led; the tribe's butcher, Glotto Sixchins, had been quite clear about that. There was good eating, the jowly old swine had said, out past the marshes, and as the hunter with the sharpest eyes, it was down to him to find the good stuff. Thing is, Krugrump wasn't sure if he was the eater, or the one being eaten.

Here he was, sloshing through knee-deep sludge with leeches all over his legs, each foot-long critter sucking hungry as a newborn piglet at its mother's teat. He pulled one from his leg and slapped it into his mouth, the squish of its ropy body between his grinder-teeth making up for the brief flash of pain he'd felt as he'd ripped its needle fangs out his kneecap. He had been thigh-deep in the bog for days now, the muck around him thick with a smell like farting goats mingled with mouldering corpses, and which somehow managed to be worse than both. He'd never admit it to the Ironguts, let alone Tyrant Logsnap himself, but it was beginning to make him feel a bit... well, a bit odd.

The rokodile bite he got a few hours ago was giving him grief something fierce, now, his thigh all red and swollen no matter how much spit he slapped on there. The beasts of the swamp had been especially ornery lately, aggressive to the point of attacking on sight. Seemed Ghur itself had it out for them, these days, ever since things had started to grow bigger than ever. As a hunter, he relished a challenge, loved to take the realm on at its own game. But just recently, he'd wished he'd been one of the lads that had gone up to the big fight in Excelsis rather than one of those who had stayed behind. Not so many beasts in the city, but so many thinlings the whole tribe could each stick six of 'em on a spit and still have plenty more for afters. His belly gave a loud grumble at the thought.

Something loomed in the fog ahead. One of the twisted, spine-limbed trees nasty enough to survive out here, by the look of it, and this one a real beauty. It was so massive the top of it disappeared from sight. As he got closer he could make out bodies hung from the trees; not by rope or vine-noose, but each pierced through the torso or the gut to dangle floppily with their limbs hanging down amongst the drape-moss. The larder of some climber-beast or winged horror, most likely, each corpse half-rotten and stinking to high heaven.

In other words, a treasure trove.

'Thing is,' said the ogor to himself as he slowed his sloshing footsteps on approach, 'ya gotta kill the beast before you nab its dinner.' An old hunter's saying, and one that was just good Ghurish sense. Better yet, if he made it to the top of the tree, he could—

'Oi Krugrump!' came a shout from a few hundred yards behind him. 'Get your lardy arse up that tree and have us a looksee would ya!'

The hunter closed his eyes for a second, giving himself a moment to gather his temper before turning and making an obscene gesture back at Glotto. The butcher and the rest of the lads were emerging from the mist behind him.

Sloshing onwards, his eyes peeled for the telltale ripple of a terrorpin or garganaconda, Krugrump made it to the tree. Propping his spears on the lower branches, he pulled himself up on the thick, stab-thorned boughs near the bottom easy enough, his sheer weight making the branches groan and the corpses impaled upon them shiver and dance. 'Stay near the trunk,' he muttered to himself, securing his spearbow over his shoulder, 'and it's a feast when you get back down.'

Hand over hand he went, a scrape here, a splinter there, the overripe corpses impaled on the tree's upwards-pointing thorns jerking around at his progress. No foliage, thank the Gulping God; this tree fed on the land as a tick fed on the back of a goat. Just as well, he thought; the climb was difficult enough without it. The mist was getting thick now, its stench filling his nostrils. It was making his head swim, and... and when he saw a corpse, he could swear it was grinning at him.

'Nearly there, corpsemeat' said one, a dead thinling woman with a badly broken neck. 'Nearly at the threshold.'

'He wants to gobble us up,' said another, a duardin with far too many teeth bared in a slashed cheek. 'He wants to squish us and swallow us down.'

'He's 'armless,' said a third voice, that of a balding Sigmarite with a twin-tailed comet tattooed on his forehead. 'Or he soon will be.'

Krugrump screwed his eyes shut, headbutting the trunk of the tree to clear his head as he pushed on higher, and higher still. The foul-smelling mist was thinning, now, and he could make out a distant ridge up ahead: the ridge that Glotto had spoken of, crested with the ruin of an ancient castle, and with a winding stair up the cliff face to meet it. He slammed his forehead into the tree trunk one more time and squinted; sure enough, it was still there.

At the ruined castle's top was what a flock of what Krugrump first took to be birds of prey, but then realised, given the scale of the fortress on which they were perched, were monstrous wyvern-like vultures big enough to carry a grunta in their talons. Each had a greenskin rider atop it. One of the riders, a hunched figure with four banners on its trophy rack, had taken a position higher than the others, and was gesticulating wildly as he held court.

The orruk leader stopped waving its hands to look in his direction, and he nearly fell out of the tree. It was like being punched in the soul. The rider threw back its head and roared, so loud Krugrump could faintly hear it on the wind; around it the bird-things around it took flight like a flock of startled crows. A moment later the orruk was coming right for him, the banners on its trophy rack fluttering, but it was still a good bit distant.

Plenty of time, thought Krugrump as he pulled out his spearbow and settled his back against the tree trunk. He'd get two, maybe even three shots in before it—

Something yanked him violently from behind, hoisting him up into the air with a sudden, shrill cry. He dropped his bow in surprise, scrabbling for his skinning-knife and slashing up at the huge, scaly claws that sunk deep into the meat of his shoulders, but it was like carving bark from a tree trunk. A giant beak cawed and shrieked above him, on either side vast wings beating hard to send swirls of mist spiralling around him. The massive vulture pecked at him, ripping his knife out of his hand and taking a couple of fingers with it. Krugrump bellowed in outrage, twisting to bite into its ankle and sink his teeth deep, but still the great raptor held on, shifting its grip to catch his arm and pull it so hard he felt the inside of his shoulder tear.

There was a deep, bass laugh as the vulture from the castle bore its rider in close. 'Quiet when they wanna be, these Corpse-rip-pas!' shouted the orruk. 'Leave their dinner as bait!'

'Call 'em off, you knackered old runt! This is cheatin'!

'Thass no way to talk to the close mate o' Mork and the prophet o' Kragnos,' said the orruk reproachfully. He was a shaman, by the look of it, given the strange collection of bric-a-brac he had dangling around his saddle-throne. 'Gobsprakk's the name. I'd say remember it, but...'

Wings beating hard, the rider's beast twisted in mid-air to thrust its claws towards him. He held out his other arm to protect his face, only to have it grabbed in the steel trap grip of the creature's talons. In a heartbeat he was held suspended in mid-air amongst a buffeting confusion of beating wings and sharp, screaming beaks, the tree's upper branches a spear's length below him. His arms were being pulled so hard in either direction he could do no more than kick and twist in a futile attempt to get free.

'Your lot on the march, big lad?' came the voice, gruff and penetrating. 'You know where the Fist of Gork is? Gordrakk – heard of him? Tell me, and ya go free. I might even lead yer tribe back to solid ground.'

There was something in the voice's tone, an orruky authority more to do with confidence than volume.

'Yeah,' shouted Krugrump, the agony in his shoulders making his voice a pained yelp. 'The big city. Excelsis! Heading south!'

'Got it,' said the shaman. 'Killabeak, Talun, take a limb for yerselves, but let the rest drop down free.'

There was a terrible, mind-swallowing agony in Krugrump's shoulders as his arms were ripped bodily from their sockets in two great fountains of blood. There were loud caws of triumph as the world span around him, the half-heard laughter of the tree-

corpses mingling to make a hideous cacophony. The hunter crashed down through the foliage and the spiny branches, smashing branches and thudding off rotting cadavers as he went. A loud cracking impact wracked his body as he hit the lowest bough. He could just about make out a giant thorn-like protrusion stabbing up through his chest to point like a red claw raised to the sky.

His vision swam, a pool of ink and blood with a distorted, jowly face in the midpoint.

'Found sumfink, then?' said Glotto, the butcher's fat, sweaty face leering in close. His breath smelt like an offal heap in summer.

'Gurrrr...' managed Krugrump, the blood in his mouth spilling down over his face. 'Gob...sprakk...'

'Ghur, thass right,' said his rival, nodding as if talking to a simpleton. 'Red in toof and claw, innit. Shame to let good grub go to waste in a place like this, just as it's all kickin' off.' He patted Krugrump's cheek, cheery and malevolent all at once as he looked back over his shoulder. 'Feedin' time lads!' he shouted, and a dozen toothy grins appeared in the hunter's blurring vision. 'Looks like ol' Krugrump found us some fresh meat after all!'

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