



# Forbidden Blades

Being a Short Treatise on the Cursed Swords of the  
Rawenfeuer Family

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## Foreword

It is said that for a warrior his sword is his life. Often one can hear many fencing instructors and sword masters even go as far as to claim that a sword is the warrior's soul and a swordsman's ability and character are reflected in the blade he wields. It is true that a shiny and well-kept blade with a sharp cutting edge that is wielded against the servants of the Ruinous Powers does speak volumes of its wielder's integrity, character and disposition. Indeed, a warrior of noble character wielding a sword forged by a master craftsman can be said to be a champion of the Empire and a guardian of its citizens.

However, not all men strive to be noble and good for all too many resort to violence for no other reason than to indulge their desire to spill blood. And as it is with men, so it is with swords – a tainted soul is reflected on the blades wielded by such wicked men and these swords come to carry an ill reputation and bring only harm to their wielders. The foulest of all these weapons are the ones touched by the Ruinous Powers and wielded by the champions of these Dark Gods. But there are also swords made by man that are cursed and yearn only to spill the blood of one's fellow man.

The author has taken upon him the thankless task of writing this treatise on a line of such swords, forged by the infamous Rawenfeuer family of Middenheim during the Age of the Three Emperors.

Verena blesses those who strive to seek the truth; hence the author feels it is his duty to pass on the results of his investigations whatever they may be. Therefore, the author's goal is to convey as objective and truthful an account of the history of the Rawenfeuer family of weaponsmiths and their downfall as possible.

Such is the story of these notorious weapons that most people would be unwilling to learn about the true nature of these instruments of death. As it happens, some of these people represent powerful, religious organisations and are thus even less inclined to discuss any investigation concerning the historical facts why these weapons are of such ill repute, and why some people might have had an interest in promoting the emergence of such a reputation.

Because of this, the author is concerned that some fanatical members of the clergy might not see the true value of such historical accuracy and is considering an invitation from a prestigious Tilean university to henceforth pursue his scholarly ambitions in.

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## History of the Rawenfeuer Blades and the Origins of Their Ill Repute

According to old journals and taxation records the Rawenfeuer family was forging weapons as early as the 1700's. The blades of this period did not yet exhibit the traits the swords of future generations would, but according to what can be gathered from contemporary sources Rawenfeuer weapons were already considered durable and well-balanced back then. However, the swords did not become sought-after until early 21<sup>st</sup> century and the time of Kristoff Rawenfeuer. Kristoff, the head of the family at the time, befriended a well-known Dwarf smith (unnamed in any records) who, according to local legends, perfected his technique in return for some great favour. There are several variations of the legend and the nature of this favour, but taking into account the secretive nature of the Dwarfs and the zeal they guard their knowledge with, the significance of this favour cannot be disputed.

Henceforth, the Rawenfeuer swords became epitomes of craftsmanship in Middenheim and the greater Middenland area. One can easily find numerous records of swords forged by the Rawenfeuer family being wielded in battles where they claimed countless lives in the name of Ulric and Middenheim. This fame, as it turns out, was not meant to last and would, in fact, turn into infamy within a relatively short period.

The days of Kristoff Rawenfeuer, the Age of the Three Emperor's, were a very tumultuous time in the Empire's history; escalating in the later stages into a conflict that had strong religious overtones as the

Cult of Sigmar and the Cult of Ulric were swept up in the Empire's politics. The conflict between these two major religious factions also marks the beginning of Rawenfeuer blades' downfall. From circa 2050 on the superior Rawenfeuer blades were often wielded against the supporters of Sigmar and, consequently, many devout followers, agitators, and priests fell under their bite. The annals from that time describe many such incidents. For example, the journal of Doktor Kaltenhauser describes how he treated a Templar of the Fiery Heart who had been mortally wounded on the outskirts of Averheim by a zealot wielding a Middenheimer sword of superior quality. In a similar tale Lord Hieronomus von Nussloss, a devout and vocal Sigmarite, was stabbed in the crotch with a Rawenfeuer claymore. The wound left the nobleman unable to procreate thus resulting in the Nussloss line ending with him.

If one investigates contemporary common dictums it can be perceived how the name Rawenfeuer was a source of pride - or fear - depending on your religious persuasion. To illustrate this point some examples are presented below:

*As fire has tempered my trusted Rawenfeuer so  
has my faith in Ulric tempered my spirit.*  
- A saying from Middenheim.

*He is as sharp as a Rawenfeuer.*  
- A person who has a sharp tongue,  
especially regarding religious or political  
commentary.

*He has Rawenfeuer eyes.*

- A person who cannot be trusted.

*He seems to be armed with a Rawenfeuer.*

- An unlucky person.

*Bleeding like a Rawenfeuer wound.*

- Harbours a grudge.

At the beginning of the 24<sup>th</sup> century, with the rising threat of Chaos and the emergence of Magnus the Pious, people of the Empire laid their religious differences aside and stood united against the Incursion of Chaos. A full account of this conflict is given in numerous other works and is beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice it to say that the Ruinous Powers were defeated and the Empire was once again united under one Emperor. With Magnus of Nuln as the new Emperor, the Sigmarites suddenly found themselves in a very strong political position. Bitterness over the past conflicts with Ulricans was still bubbling under the surface and some of the priests felt that the Cult should use their advantageous position to fortify their grip to power.

It was an opinion shared by many of these priests that the best way to go about this would be to undermine the power of the Cult of Ulric and its powerbase in Middenheim. They figured that a scapegoat should be chosen, one that could not be claimed to be a direct attack against the Cult of Ulric but would still serve as a strong symbolic remainder. The dreaded Rawenfeuer swords turned out to be the perfect target.

The priests knew that the Rawenfeuer swords were a source of pride to Middenheim. Conversely, the blades had an ill reputation among the worshippers of Sigmar and many believed the blades thirsted for their blood. As the swords already had a reputation in and around

Reikland of being cursed it was easy to build up on this image and claim they were indeed damned and would bring bad fortune to their wielder.

Ten years before Magnus the Pious started his pilgrimage, Mortus Rawenfeuer had taken his father's place as the head of the Rawenfeuer family and was the master weaponsmith. It is a well-known fact that Mortus was interested in the dubious Art of Alchemy, and often used his knowledge to his benefit when forging a blade. To put their plans into motion the Sigmarites quickly seized this opportunity and accused Mortus Rawenfeuer of being a heretic and a worshipper of the Ruinous Powers. In 2305, after exhaustive questioning, Mortus Rawenfeuer was found guilty of heresy and burnt at the stake in Nuln. All attempts by the author to view the records of the interrogation have been met with a stern refusal from the Initiatic and Holy Order of the Templars of Sigmar on the grounds that the evidence is simply too blasphemous for a layman to peruse.

After the execution, by the order of the Grand Theogonist, some of the best lawyers in Altdorf were given the task of drafting an edict that would establish the Rawenfeuer swords forbidden within Sigmar's Empire. This edict, which is printed below, banned the Rawenfeuer family from forging any more weapons, and their smithy in Middenheim was torn down brick by brick. Furthermore, it was forbidden to carry or wield a Rawenfeuer blade of any kind. Punishments for failing to comply with this edict ranged from severe flogging to burning at the stake.

*Henceforth all swords and blades forged by the Rawenfeuer family from Middenheim are considered illegal within the Empire of Sigmar. Any person in possession of such a sword is ordered to immediately relinquish their weapons to*

*the nearest Temple of Sigmar. Furthermore, all citizens of the Empire are hereby ordered to notify the authorities immediately when learning of a whereabouts of a Rawenfeuer sword. Failure to comply with this edict will be met with most severe judgement for heresy and trafficking with the Ruinous Powers against Sigmar and his Church, the Emperor, and the good citizens of the Empire.*

Some sources that have survived in Middenheim suggest that this edict was actually intended to be the first in a series of such resolutions all intended to weaken the powerbase of the Cult of Ulric.

As time passed an aura of mystery and ungodliness enveloped the Rawenfeuer

blades. People started regarding them as cursed swords that bring bad fortune to whoever wields them. Today, they are seen as evil swords that yearn for the blood of the Sigmarites and any mention of them is a bad omen. It is even whispered that Mortus Rawenfeuer, the last of the family's weaponsmiths, was a Chaos magus and chanted blasphemous rites when forging the blades and tempering them with Wyrdstone. Conversely, in Middenheim the Rawenfeuer family enjoys a good reputation to this day, and their unfortunate fate is seen as a martyrdom of sorts.

## A Closer Examination of Chosen Rawenfeuer Blades

### **Augenstenger - The Sword that Blinded Grand Theogonist Lothar Sodenstern**

This sword is the most famous Rawenfeuer and the blade most of all responsible for the defamation of these weapons. Augenstenger was used in 2138 to blind Grand Theogonist Sodenstern. Sodenstern was addressing the crowds in Wurtbad, when Wulfgang Nagengast, a young student from Middenland, blinded him with a wound across the eyes. The Collegium Theologica, where Nagengast was had been studying, had been closed by the order of the Grand Theogonist a month earlier on the grounds of inappropriate theological doctrine<sup>1</sup>. The students and

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<sup>1</sup> According to 'The Religious History of Middenland' (by Hermann Matthauss) the Collegium was closed because one of the members of the faculty was suspected of being a

scholar rioted in protest and during these riots Nagengast's girlfriend was accidentally trampled to death.

Seeking revenge for his girlfriend Nagengast pawned all the books and tomes he had been able to steal from the Collegium, and with this money he was able to afford a genuine Rawenfeuer sword. When the Grand Theogonist was giving his next public sermon the vengeful Nagengast was in the audience; the claymore hidden under his heavy cloak. At an opportune moment the student brandished his sword, attacked, and blinded the Grand Theogonist with a deep wound across the eyes. Knights of Sodenstern's personal honor guard slew the young man before he managed to deliver a killing blow.

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member of the fanatical Ulrican sect the Sons of Ulric.

Nagengast was a slender youth who had neither skill with a sword nor experience with weapons of any kind. Yet he had been able to blind, and almost kill, one of the most influential men in the Empire. When it was discovered that the claymore he had used was a Rawenfeuer rumours spread like wildfire that because the youth was unskilled and weak it must have been the sword itself that had thirsted for Sodenstern's blood. Soon the blade was given the moniker 'Augenstenger'. It is widely believed that this sword was the first sword destroyed by the priests of Sigmar after the edict to ban all Rawenfeuers was passed.

### Heinrich Steinschlager's Great Sword

Once the rumours of the evil Rawenfeuer blades started spreading they stroke fear into the hearts of many Sigmarites. One such man was Lord von Rosenheimer. He was supposed to lead his men into battle against Lord Heinrich Steinschlager's troops and the two armies were to meet at a field outside Hergig. The night before the battle Lord von Rosenheimer received word that the enemy commander was armed with one of the notorious Rawenfeuer swords.

At daybreak the commanders rode out to meet each other on the field. Lord von Rosenheimer called out Heinrich Steinschlager with a challenge. Von Rosenheimer claimed that he was not afraid of his enemy or his blasphemous weapons. He then challenged Steinschlager to display the power of his blade.

According to the legend, Steinschlager dismounted without saying a word,

walked up to a big rock and with one mighty strike cleaved the rock in two. This display terrified Lord von Rosenheimer so thoroughly that he quickly fled the field of battle<sup>2</sup>. Being left without their commander von Rosenheimer's forces were quickly disbanded. The fate of the great sword is unknown, but it is believed destroyed. Some unconfirmed reports, however, speak of a great sword of matching description surfacing in Middenheim during the Storm of Chaos.

### The Burning Rawenfeuer of Nuln

Once the edict to ban all Rawenfeuer swords was passed a printing press in Nuln was busy printing pamphlets of this declaration. An anonymous supporter of the Rawenfeuer family discovered the location of the particular printing press that was making these pamphlets. One day this man appeared at the press, declared himself a friend of the Rawenfeuer family (there is speculation among historians whether this man might have actually been one of their relatives) and proceeded to demolish their equipment. While the printers fled in horror the man poured oil inside the premises and set the house on fire. Before fleeing the scene the man struck his sword at the doorway so no-one would dare enter to put out the fire. Contemporary eyewitness accounts speak of a huge bonfire with only the menacing sword visible amidst the raging inferno. The blade was destroyed in the fire.

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<sup>2</sup> Jurgen Herrikel, in his famous book 'Ulric and the Art of Swordsmanship', uses this incident as an example on how a sword can achieve a victory without resorting to bloodshed.

## Concerning Characteristics Typical to These Swords

The Rawenfeuers forged an uncountable number of weapons during the centuries. The edict passed by the Church of Sigmar does not segregate these blades in any way but in practice it was understood to first and foremost concern blades forged by Mortus Rawenfeuer. In any event, the swords did not display the characteristic features of a Rawenfeuer blade until as recently as after Kristoff Rawenfeuer's time. Estimates regarding the number of blades forged by Mortus Rawenfeuer vary from as little as three to as many as thirty. How many are left, if any, is impossible to say with any certainty.

There are several characteristics that define a typical Rawenfeuer blade, especially one forged by Mortus. Firstly, the swords are either claymores or great swords. The Rawenfeuer smiths specialised in large swords that usually took more time to forge and demanded more raw materials. The need for such large weapons also reflects the Ulrican military doctrine of the time. Secondly, hand guards of these swords are usually decorated with Ulrican symbolism like wolf heads and fangs. Often, similar symbolism can be found on the pommel as well. This is typical to all Middenheim weaponsmiths even today. Thirdly, the superior quality of these swords is best evidenced in their blades. The heart of the Rawenfeuer technique is evident in the exceptional fullers, also known as central channels or grooves, which lighten the blade, yet make it stronger and more flexible at the same time. The endurance

and balance of these blades is what makes them superior to most other swords. Finally, the most easily recognisable feature of a Rawenfeuer sword is the family crest engraved on the blade; a raven's head circled with flames. Kristoff Rawenfeuer was the first to engrave this symbol on his swords and its original purpose was most likely to drive away evil spirits and frighten the opponent. Today, it is seen to depict the vile nature of these weapons.

Who, then, are able to recognise Rawenfeuer blades for what they are? Any Dwarf smith, or any weaponsmith, worth his reputation is able to recognise one. The priests of Sigmar have most likely heard the legend at some point; and every witch hunter worth his salt is most definitely able to recognise these cursed weapons with a first glance. In Middenheim there are many soldiers who have never actually seen a Rawenfeuer blade but have heard of them many times.

In game terms, any character with **Trade (Weaponsmith)** or **Academic Knowledge (History)** is allowed a **Challenging (-10%) Test** to recognise a Rawenfeuer sword. Also, Witch Hunters and the clergy of Sigmar and Ulric should be allowed a test. In some circumstances, even **Gossip** or **Common Knowledge (History)** might allow for a test, if the GM deems it fit.

## A Proper Method of Destruction

The Church of Sigmar has striven hard to eradicate these weapons from the Empire. As a result, a set of very strict measures has been developed to ensure the proper method of destruction. To destroy the weapon's evil and corruptive influence a priest of Sigmar must perform the following rite. First of all, when a Rawenfeuer sword is secured it should be kept in its scabbard at all times. Also, the sword and the scabbard should be covered with a black cloth until it reaches the nearest Temple of Sigmar.

Once there, two High-Priests should be present at all times during the following *Rite of Purification and Destruction*; no-one is to be ever alone with such an instrument of evil. The Rite begins with the removal of the black cloth and the scabbard. Then the sword is rinsed with water to wash away any blood. This purification also symbolises the washing away of the sins committed with the blade. Next, the

sword is placed on an anvil and a weaponsmith with a stout heart and purity of spirit is summoned. In the presence of the priests the smith removes the hilt from the blade, breaks the blade in two and finally melts all the metal into one lump. Once the lump has cooled it is taken to a segregated piece of land that has been previously purified with prayers and salts and buried there. The ritual ends with the priests and the smith washing their hands and feet and then praying together in silence to cleanse their spirits.

Of course, there are also those who believe that such items should not be destroyed but studied to better understand them and their evil. Such individuals quickly attract the attention of witch hunters though. Some nobles have been known to find Rawenfeuer blades suitably eccentric collector's items and are willing to pay handsome amounts for a genuine piece.



## Game Stats

The truth is Rawenfeuer swords are not cursed nor are they magical any way. Instead, they are just Best Quality weapons with a very bad reputation. And it is this reputation that might have an affect on the wielder. If the person wielding the blade does not know that he is actually wielding such ill reputed weapon the Rawenfeuer acts in his hands just like a Best Quality weapon of a given type. But men are often gullible and the mind can deceive itself. Therefore, if the person is aware that he is in possession of a “cursed” Rawenfeuer he believes that he is indeed wielding a sword that will bring him bad luck. Furthermore, if his opponents know that they are facing an enemy who is armed with a “cursed” blade they will become bolder and more confident in their abilities. Also, the Rawenfeuers have an especially bad reputation among the followers of Sigmar, so facing such a weapon is a truly terrifying experience for them. A Wizard examining a Rawenfeuer sword with Witchsight would be affected by his beliefs as well. These game effects are summarized below.

### Rawenfeuer Claymore

*Modifier to WS Special* (see table below); *Enc* 135; *Group* Two-handed; *Dmg* SB; *Qualities* Slow (one-handed) or Impact and Slow (two-handed)

### Rawenfeuer Great Sword

*Modifier to WS Special* (see table below); *Enc* 225; *Group* Two-handed; *Dmg* SB+1; *Qualities* Impact and Slow

### Weapon Skill Modifier

Level of Information	WS Modifier*
Wielder does not know he is armed with a “cursed” Rawenfeuer	+5 % to wielder’s WS
Wielder knows he is armed with a “cursed” Rawenfeuer	-5 % to wielder’s WS
Opponent does not know about the Rawenfeuer	No effect on opponent’s WS
Opponent knows about the Rawenfeuer	+5 % to opponent’s WS
Opponent is a Sigmarite (Initiate, Priest etc.)	The wielder is considered to have the Frightening Talent ( <i>see WFRP Core Rulebook</i> )

\* These modifiers include the normal +5% Best Quality weapon bonus.

## Adventure Hooks

- I. The PCs are stopped by Watchmen who are conducting a search. They want to see everyone's swords and confiscate all weapons that look suspicious to them in any way. If asked, the sergeant will tell them that according to rumours there is a Chaos-tainted Rawenfeuer blade somewhere in the city. Soon after this incident the PCs are approached by an elderly man who claims to be a collector of antiques; he would be willing to pay them handsomely if they could bring him the rare Rawenfeuer blade. Who has the blade, and why? And why does this collector want it so badly? Besides the Church of Sigmar and the PCs, who else is looking for the blade?
- II. The PCs are hired by the local Temple of Sigmar to find an Initiate who has gone missing during a trek to Middenland. The priest fears foul play as the area can sometimes be hostile towards the followers of Sigmar. The truth is, the Initiate met an old scholar and learned that the sword he has been carrying for years is actually a Rawenfeuer. Now he believes he cannot return to the temple after committing such heresy. He does not want to abandon the blade as someone else might eventually find it. Therefore, he has decided to leave the temple and take it upon himself to be the guardian of the cursed sword until he finds a way to dispose of it. But he does not know that local Sons of Ulric have learned that there is a Rawenfeuer blade in the area and they want to find it. Can the PCs find the Initiate in time and help him destroy the blade?
- III. A dispute has arisen between two noble families and they have agreed to settle the matter with a duel between representative champions. One of the families hires the PCs as extra protection for their Champion until the day of the duel. But the other family has secretly changed the Champion's sword with a Rawenfeuer blade before the duel. The Champion wins the duel using the cursed sword and the truth of the matter is discovered after the fight. If word gets out the family's reputation will be ruined and they might face the pyres. The family holds the PCs responsible and demands that they find the real culprits – or they will have their heads. The PCs must find the guilty person before the truth is revealed. All evidence points at the other noble family but the real culprit is the Noble Lord's own son who has been studying magic and has become a member of a Tzeenchian cult. He wants to destroy his father so he, and the cult, will get their hands on family fortunes.

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This article was inspired by the following sources: *Old World Armoury*, *Sigmar's Heirs*, *The Loathsome Ratmen*, *The Witch Hunter's Handbook*, and *Samurai Executioner* manga series.