



The Sundering

A Caravan Master's Tale

— 30th Eleint 1485 DR —

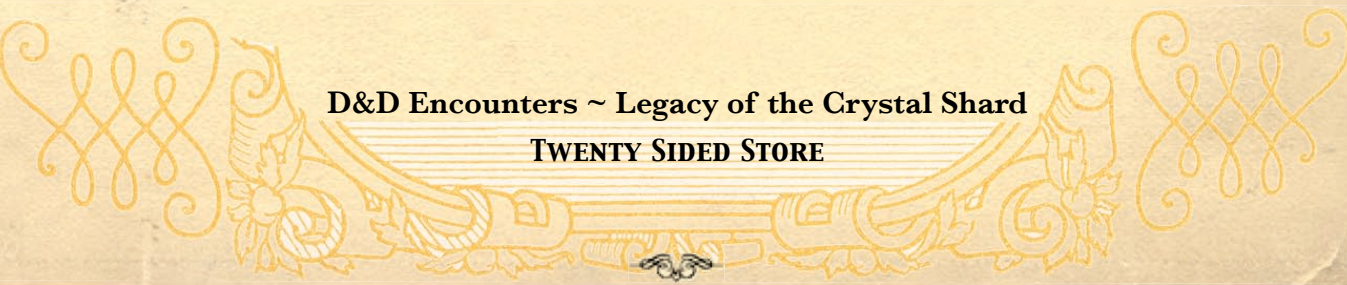
Father,

Greetings from Battlehammer Hall! Ah, your roustabout son finally walks once again in the storied passages o' leewind Dale's Dwarves. My heart is gladdened by our arrival. My spirit, as well as my stomach, are much warmed by the hospitality o' Dane Stokely Silverstream, Clan Battlehammer's leader. However there is a cloud hanging over the folk o' the Dwarven Valley, larger than the one I'd first feared. My companion, Helda Silverstream, the cousin to Stokely, is simply happy to be back among her people, though our arrival was like a splash of ice water upon the face; surprised and cold. I shall come to that tale soon enough.

For now, know that I miss my stout comrades from the road and not only for the safety of their blades but the acuity of their minds, but because much of leewind Dale finds itself set askance by these troubling times. As Helda and I trekked North, I thought of them often. I figured they'd be hitting Easthaven just as we were passing through Caer-Ronig on our way North. No doubt they would stop to resupply as we did and I figured at least a few o' them wouldn't pass up a chance to catch up on the latest tavern talk. The tale that was on the lips o' those in town was about a new group of brigands plying the lake. Sailing in a pirate vessel with a prow made of black ice that they call Howling Fiend, these scoundrels are destroying fishing vessels after ransacking what goods they have. The speakers of the nearby settlements are in an uproar and a bounty is expectantly awaited.


I find myself unconsciously tracking my far off comrades' path in my mind's eye. For if they hold true to their course set by Hengar of the Elk Tribe they will cross the open tundra between Ten Towns and the Spine of the World mountains. This is the known territory of the Blood Ice Ores and they are vicious hunters who interbreed with Ogres so as to count the vicious Oroggs, half ore and half ogre, among their clan. Long have the Ores been at odds with the Tribe of the Elk. If my friends are able to brave the tundra claimed by the Blood Ice then they will arrive finally at the Reghed Glacier, a beautiful wall of ice that gleams like a diamond.

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There they shall find King Jarlund and his Elk Tribe at their seasonal camp. I trust that my comrade's words and deeds will see them received honorably and as friends amongst the Elk Tribe. I pray to Moradin to keep them safe and lend fire to their souls as they face the Dale's trials.

I pray for Helda and myself as well, for as we finally entered the valley of the Dwarves, with Kelvin's Cairn towering above us, we found the passageways empty, cold and shadowed. An eerie feeling hung over us, emanating from the silent pass and we had our weapons near at hand. When finally we spotted a patrol of guards, we were unsure whether to be relieved or worried; for it was known a feud had broke out amidst the clan. We were hailed by the guards and asked who the true leader of the valley was. Helda shouted out her family's name, Silverstream, and we readied ourselves for an argument laced with iron. Thankfully Dumathoin winked for the patrol was loyal to Stokely, Helda's good cousin and so they brought us deep into the West side of the valley. There we found the rumors were true and deep divisions do run between the dwarves and another camp is said to lay somewhere on the East side of the valley. My blood has chilled, no matter the amount of ale I drink, for this discord bodes quite ill for the valley of the Dwarves, especially because of the whispered words I've heard. These barely spoken fears hint of undead in the deepest levels of the tunnels and mines. Something is very wrong here.

Pray for us all.
Borne