



# The Sundering

## A Caravan Master's Tale

— 1st Marpenoth 1485 DR —

Father,

Highharvesttide has come and gone. The warmth of our traditions brought me no solace in this year of the Iron Dwarf's Vengeance. An apt name, for this Winter, the empty tunnels of the Battlehammer Dwarves with whom I dwell, and now the cold ground of the valley floor I now rest upon, for they have all felt like the sternest of Dwarven rebukes.

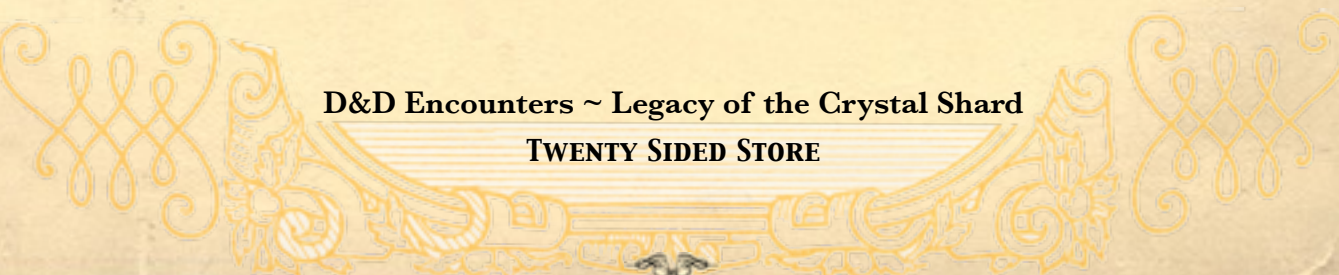
Once it was clear that Helda had gone off with the notion of starting the truce between the sides of the Dwarven schism, I felt trouble coming in my beard roots. As her kin and me went to follow her trail, Dane Stokely wove the tale of Bagrick Hammerstone, once a simple miner of clan Battlehammer.

It seemed near the end of Eleasias, after the first of the great storms came early, a wizard's apprentice, a human named Pallidor, hired Bagrick and a party of miners to go far up into Kelvin's Cairn. And so did they travel, leaving the Dwarven Valley.


However, when they returned, thirteen days later, only Bagrick was alive amongst the Dwarves that did travel hence. It was then that Bagrick the miner did begin to sell the wares of black ice. Crudely made they were, but all small trinkets looking like an axe or a hammer. Some folk took a fancy to them, especially outsiders. However Bagrick must have brought back a quantity and then returned to the source for more at some point; because soon there were small weapons and helms made of the stuff popping up here and there.

During this time after Bagrick's return the zombie attacks did begin deep in the mines. Many of the Battlehammer Clan began to whisper of a curse and so the Dwarf folk bought the black ice, for it was said to ward off the zombies.

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Some days later, as more Dwarves were disappearing in the deeps, dragged down by zombies, did Bagrick Hammerstone publicly quarrel with Danz Stokely. Indeed, the black ice smith loudly questioned Danz Stokely's leadership and dedication to protecting his people when he would not carry a talisman of black ice. After this terrible argument, Bagrick led a group of dwarves to a redoubt in the Eastern valley, a place they dubbed the Halls of Black Ice, and settled there.

The clan splitting and more deaths occurring in the deep tunnels, Danz Stokely moved his remaining folk to the fortified clan-hall deep in the Western tunnels known as Battlehammer Hold.

Thus did I enter this dreadful state of affairs, but dear Father it will not be how I leave it, of that I can assure you. Moradin is with me. I have tracked Helda to a site of battle. It seems she was taken alive by Dwarven sentries loyal to Bagrick. It turns my stomach to think of Dwarf killing Dwarf, so my heart was gladdened to see no signs of death in the struggle.

I now scribble these final words, here upon the precipice of my destiny. Father, I go now to free Helda and then return to the Battlehammer. Should I fall, I pray you read these words and know honor.

~ Beorn