

The Sundering

A Caravan Master's Tale

7th Marpenoth 1485 DR

Father,

I write to you from the White Lady Inn, one of the better establishments in the fast growing settlement of Easthaven. Ha! I can envision your brows furrowing even now, for last I wrote my surroundings were quite different.

It is better, I think, to recall the chilled darkness that was our struggle against the forces of Auril from a place of warmth and light with strong ale alongside me. Even now, in the safety of this place, the memory of our assault on the Tower of Black Ice causes a shiver down my spine.

My comrades had engaged a true spouter of Icewind Dale's past, Akar Kessell, the once Tyrant of Icewind Dale. Returned as an undead abomination, the creature's magic had lost none of its potency and was now in service to the Frost Maiden's cause. With grit and determination our strength of arms prevailed and we stood before a swirling column of frost flaked winds, the only way to ascend to the top most level of the tower, to the very sanctum of the Ice Witch once known as Hedrun Arnsfirth, maid of the Elk Tribe.

Stepping into the swirling storm, we were pulled off our feet and shot up into the air with such force that upon our arrival in the chamber of ice above, we were driven to our knees. The room was sparsely decorated. Only containing an altar to Auril flanked by statues of black ice and a frozen throne dominated the chamber.

Hedrun sat upon the throne as we arrived and immediately vented our fury; slings, arrows, and javelins flew but none could touch her; our attacks deflected from icy armor that covered the Ice Witch from head to toe. Her mirth at our feeble attacks froze my blood and she began to utter honeyed words, promises of mercy if we were to join with her and become champions of Auril.

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My comrades would have none of it, their path clear and though many of my more merciful friends called to Hædrun to remind her of her former life, to attempt to bring her back from the brink of being lost to Auril's fury but to no avail. The tragedy of Hædrun Armsfirth is a saga awaiting an author for though she was a terrible curse to Leeward Dale, I cannot help remembering that once she was but a simple maiden who was banished from her people through no true fault of her own.

My comrades sacrificed much in the final battle with Auril's Chosen and many fell before Hædrun's magic to preserve the lives of all the people of Leeward Dale. I will carry their names upon my heart forever more. As her body lay before us, shattered like ice, the entire tower itself began to crumble. We located a magic mirror, a match to the one we found within the lair of Davick Fain, and were able to activate its magic, which whisked us away to safety.

It is my feeling now that Hædrun was also a victim of Auril's wraith and I wonder at the God's propensity to destroy the lives of mortals they touch. There are those amongst us who name themselves Chosen of their Deity and I now find myself wondering, what does this truly mean?

Hædrun could not be saved. Her power was too great, her soul too tightly gripped by Auril; we could not reach the woman that existed somewhere within the entity known as the Ice Witch. More is the pity.

After our escape we found ourselves transported to an ancient magical circle of runes set upon a small rock island within the Sea of Moving Ice however we were not alone. Camping upon the island was a group of Elves, which called themselves the Tribe of the Falcon. Indeed, amongst the elves were a flock of giant falcons!

The elves presented themselves as allies of our friends in the Tribe of the Elk and offered their aid to quickly fly us back to Leeward Dale. Father I can't adequately describe for you the elation of flying above the world, seeing vast armies below you as nothing but children's toys.

Now I can only settle in for the rest of the winter and know that our efforts brought some sort of peace to Leeward Dale. I hope that the peace we've won lasts. Until we meet again. I remain forever your devoted son.

~ Beorn

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