

## **Prologue**

During their travels through Eberron, each of the individuals now sitting in car 4A of the lightning rail to Sharn met a scholar named Bonal Geldem. Bonal was kind and honest, almost grandfatherly in his treatment towards each of them. The more time they spent with him, the more they came to admire this man who loved his job at Morgrave University. Sadly, they parted ways as their journeys led them in separate directions. But they always kept in touch and his weekly letters were eagerly anticipated. His last letter, however, was almost cryptic in nature and included a small purse full of coin.

In the letter, he urged each of them to meet him in Sharn and to use the money to buy passage on the lightning rail. He suggested they stay in a specific car where they would find others of whom he had also requested meet him in Sharn. They each found just enough money in the purse to purchase a one-way ticket to Sharn.

The question remained; what did Bonal want and why did he want to meet them almost immediately after they arrived in Sharn?

## **Chapter 1: Meeting and Greeting**

"Two days to Sharn," the ticket agent said as he gathered passes. As he left the car, the door closed behind him slowly, almost as if it were vacuum-sealing the passengers. The ragtag bunch crammed inside was a strange sight; a dwarf, an elf, a warforged, and three humans. All were obviously anxious and worried. The tension was palpable. After a few minutes, a voice broke the silence.

"Two days to Sharn," repeated Jebber. "Are we all going to Sharn, then? Forgive my babbling if it's out of place. I've never been on the Rail before and I'm quite excited to finally see Morgrave. Have any of you been to Sharn before?"

"I've been," answered Lealani as she shifted to get a better look at the person who asked. "I live there some of the time."

"How interesting!" continued Jebber. "I find travelers always have the most interesting stories. What about the rest of you? Aureon teaches that shared knowledge is doubled wealth."

"No, my travels with the House never took me there, but it is supposed to be a fascinating place," replied Kolthak. "I'm surprised the rail is so crowded that we're packed in here like this. Hopefully we'll be able to move around the train so as not to get stuck in place."

"House, you say? If I may ask, which house is that?" Lealani asked, genuinely curious.

"Ach, there's only one Dwarven House lass, Kundarak," Kolthak answered with a chuckle.

"Of course!" Lea laughed lightly with a huge smile on her face, "But I would never presume to know what someone's business is."

Jebber smiled and nodded. "Kundarak's scions have been a boon throughout Zilargo. Have you perchance visited, friend Dwarf?"

It was at this moment that Ilyra lowered her book and started paying attention.

"Should I assume you are one of the Dragonmarked, Dwarf? Or at least work for them?"

Kolthak had to physically turn in his seat to answer both people.

"No, I've not been to Zilargo," he said to Jebber. He then turned to answer Ilyra.

"My family is part of the Kundarak clan." Kolthak then glanced at what Ilyra was reading, "I'm guessing from that book that you'd be a wizard of some kind. I have an uncle who's an abjurer."

"Yes, I am a wizard," Ilyra answered. "But I'm not specialized in anything, like your uncle. I prefer to study all aspects of magic equally. Hey, your uncle doesn't have any contact with Morgrave University, does he? I studied there and I might have met him."

"No, my uncle doesn't work with Morgrave though he may have been there at some point. He does most of his work for the guilds of the House," Kolthak explained.

"I know someone at Morgrave as well. Have you perchance studied with Master Geldem, my lady?" Jebber asked with great interest.

There was an audible hush in the car. It was at that moment that everyone else realized that these were the people Bonal wanted them to meet. Jebber continued.

"I'm quite grateful to him, as he's actually the reason for my traveling. Did you study with him long, fair elf?"

"Not terribly long - he tutored me in the local history of Sharn when I was a little younger. I have always missed him though."

Ilyra piped up. "I believe he wanted for us to meet each other on the way to Sharn. But I have no idea what he wants. Do any of you?"

"I don't," said Lealani. "I admit, I have been rather worried thinking about this business, his last correspondence was, well, not very like him." She looked over each companion. "So then, what do you all do? The lady studies magic. What about the rest of you?" She smiled again, "Or we could just start with names."

"Well, since Master Geldem wanted us to meet, we might as well start with the introductions" Ilyra said, smiling, "My name is Ilyra Syrion and magic is just one of my fields of study. I like to fancy myself as a scholar, but I just recently graduated from Morgrave University, which was where I met Professor Geldem. "

"Congratulations on your graduation," Lea nodded towards Ilyra. She stood and pulled her skirt out around her, curtsying low. "Lealani of the noble House Phairlan. I am a singer and escort for my House. Before I received the letter from Master Geldem, I was on my way to continue my training with my Auntie in Sharn."

Jebber spoke up next. ""Well met, well met! I am Jebber Roonkin, and I'm a junior research assistant at the Korranberg Library. Though recently, I've also taken up a bit of the family mantle as an initiate of the Sovereign Host. I don't know anyone in Sharn, so I'm delighted to make all of your acquaintances."

Kolthak's answer was a little more to-the-point. "I am Kolthak of the Rundarak family of clan Kundarak."

The quiet human who sat near the window finally spoke up. "I knew Master Geldam also. I am hopeful that he will be able to help me discover my family roots in Sharn. It is said that we Blackthorn's are supposedly related the great House of Denieth. My name is Rathan Blackthorn, a blacksmith by trade but I am moving on in hopes of discovering adventure and fame in this great world."

Lealani sat back down between two of her new companions. "It's a pleasure to meet you all. Anyone have a clue as to why Master Geldam would gather us all together, or what is going on?"

Before anyone could answer, the warforged spoke for the first time.

"Sitting there, minding his own business, taking a window seat since he's not liable to get up for the entire two day trip. He would have been absolutely content to ignore everyone, everything, and just watch the passing scenery outside. What reason was there to bother with anything else? The scenery wasn't particularly judgmental, and if it was, it wouldn't matter much since it would pass rapidly through the window and be replaced by something new."

"But everyone else had to speak, and keep speaking. Annoying people, with their constantly moving around, adjusting this and that, talking about boring stuff that happened years ago. What's their problem? But never mind that, they could be ignored. It's not like they were trying to involve him in the conversation... or were they? Somebody said something like 'derfurged' a minute ago. And something something something Gell-dem. Never mind that. They couldn't be talking to the garbage bin in the window seat minding his own business. Absolutely silent, not mumbling a single word."

"And of course, these loud, disrespectful, ornery, ugly, lumpy, waterbags had no reason to suspect that the cold metal heroic figure sitting in the window seat was on his way to see the very same person that they were all headed for. They, of course, had no reason to suspect that Bonal Geldem had tried to fix the poor scrap-heap that was staring blankly out the window. How would they know? It was an impossible probability that they might have overheard whispers in the shadows as the boarded the train. They must have looked down at him, knowing full well that such a broken, beaten, misshapen warforged soldier could never have had the honor of meeting one as generous as the great repairer Bonal Geldem. Nope. No way they would ever know."

It was a few moments before anyone else spoke, waiting for the warforged to actually address someone directly. When he didn't, Kolthak continued the previous conversation.

"Well, we have a few scholars, some spell slingers, a society person, someone seeking his fortune, and a... warforged. I'd guess there is something he wants quietly investigated or sought out, and it may be magical in nature. And it's probably in or near Sharn. But we'll know soon enough when we see him. In the meantime, perhaps we should move about the train a little to stretch and see what other diversions may be available for the next day or two."

Jebber perked up at this. "I think you have the right of it. And speaking of stretching, I've got a bit of a nosh. Anyone up for a trip to the dining car?"

Rathan acknowledged this. "I'd like to join you. The road has been long and I am thirsty."

"That sounds wonderful. It is a bit cramped in here." Lealani poked her head into the hallway and found a sign pointing to the dining car.

Kolthak stood up and stretched a bit. "Hopefully there is something worth eating or drinking on this trip."

Ilyra closed her book and stuffed it inside her backpack before getting up. "I will be glad to join you in the dinner car." She turned towards the warforged. "Hey, Mr. Warforged, I know you don't eat, but would you join us out of courtesy?"

The warforged spoke to no one in particular. "The lone warforged waited, patiently, watching to the west of the gliding train, paying no attention to what was going on elsewhere around him."

Lealani looked around curiously, "Does anyone else hear the... *machine*... ignoring us?"

Kolthak just shrugged and started off towards the dining car.

Rathan motioned to Lealani, "After you, my lady."

"Thank you kind sir," she said, smiling as she brushed past him and into the hallway.

Opening the door to the car just one over from theirs, the smell of hot food met their nostrils, causing involuntary salivating by the dwarf.

Shrapnel continued to stare out the window, oblivious to what was happening around him. He began to speak.

"Perhaps out of a strange sense of pity for the damaged and absent-minded seeming warforged, one of the guests approached them and attempted to strike a conversation. Having no interest in leaving his perch, the golem turned and responded, attempting to tactfully feign interest in the idea, and then dismiss it in what he hoped would amount to a friendly manner."

Shrapnel turned briefly, facing the question. He then turned back to the window.

"I then restored my focus to the task at hand, the window to the west. There was much to survey during this trip, and the incredible volume of information to absorb presented itself in a smooth blur of colors and changing fauna. The light would provide an ever-changing range of colors and perspective. Somewhere out there was an adventure, waiting to happen."

Suddenly, the window shattered inward into a thousand pieces! Shrapnel threw his arms up over his face, trying to keep the shards of broken glass out of his eyes. He moved his forearm and saw another warforged standing in the aisle of the room, a short sword in his hand and a rope tied around his waist. His eyes were blood red and he stared at Shrapnel with an obvious murderous intent.

## **Chapter 2: The Plot Thickens**

The warforged that crashed through the window stared at Shrapnel. Shrapnel began to speak again.

"Suddenly, as if to answer my inaudible request for action, the very window I was looking through shattered into a thousand tiny pieces. Had I the skin of one of these poor defenseless fleshbags, I might have been disfigured or blinded by such a kaleidoscope of blades. I stood to face whatever aggressor had foolishly chosen **this** particular car to invade. I was saddened only that this infraction would distract me from the bounty of the visual cornucopia outside the train."

The party-crashing warforged raised his blade and cut deeply into Shrapnel's iron hide, another gash showing itself on Shrapnel's weathered frame.

"What was that?" Ilyra said as she ran back to the car, wondering what caused the sound of breaking glass the party had heard. Based upon the sounds of battle, she thought it prudent to use her Dragonmark. She removed the glove from her left hand and her Mark glowed brightly as she found herself protected by arcane magic.

Lealani made her way back towards the sound of battle, peeking in to see the two warforged locked in combat.

"Friend of yours?" she comments to Shrapnel before looking back down the hallway to the others. "There's another warforged in here! Looks like it swung in from the roof!"

Shrapnel did not respond to Lealani's question. Instead, he continued to monologue.

"I was surprised and stayed my hand a moment longer than I had desired. Where was my sword? No. I have no sword. A blade is an unnecessary serial appendage, one needed not by my hands. I looked at my opponent, his eyes with a strange rage. Another warforged? And why would he want to harm me? Nevertheless, I yelled a resounding insult, sure to demoralize my opponent, and while he reconsidered his foolish actions I attempted to strike him with my broken hand!"

"I thought for a moment about the six vials I kept nearby. Clearly he saw me as an inferior, a weak and damaged model that was fundamentally flawed. I felt perplexed. Was this how I would finally be rendered useless?"

Unfortunately, Shrapnel's swing bounces off of the warforged's metal and does no damage.

"No! I had to press on. This broken warforged had a chance, albeit a slim one!"

The rest of the group made their way back to the car, with Kolthak muttering under his breath.

"All the bloody thing does it talk to itself, and now there's two of them!"

Seeing itself hopelessly outnumbered, the crashing warforged pulled on the rope tied around its waist. It immediately was pulled out of the window and up on to the top of the speeding Rail!

Ilyra's eyes widened and she drew her crossbow, ready to attack any more warforged that made their way through the window.

"Well my new friends, this most certainly is not coincidence. As I doubt our good friend Geldam would set us up, it's our duty to investigate!" Lealani said as she cast *mage armor* on herself and starting making her way towards the intersection between this car and the next, looking for a way up to the roof. Once she was standing in the intersection, out in the elements, she was able to locate a ladder on the outside of the Rail that could be reached from where she was standing. She yelled back to the others on her discovery.

Looking over at the warforged, Rathan asked, "Are you damaged? I'm a blacksmith with expertise in armorsmithing. I may be able to help you."

"With the weight of additional injury upon himself, the warforged reached into his pack and procured a vial of the elixir provided by one Bonal Geldam some time ago. With his steel but agile fingers, he uncorked the container and slathered its contents into the damage incurred by the shortsword of the errant attacker," Shrapnel replied as he applied his oil of repair.

"When the strange male asks his question, the warforged abruptly explained his nominal situation and described the affect the contents of his potent solution working its way through the damage."

Shrapnel turned to the smith and started to mime a serious of animated but ultimately useless gestures.

"Apparently you don't," Rathan responded as he made his way to the ladder.

Jebber yelled out, "Let's head the villains off before they escape!" as he made his way to the door, holding it open for those who needed to race through it since it opened and closed automatically.

Kolthak decided the best bet would be to make his way to the opposite door from the party, just in case the enemy decided to double back.

Ilyra, seeing Kolthak head to a door, followed him to the opposite end of the car from where the others were standing. She was able to find another ladder to the top of the car.

Lealani grinned, lifted the front of her well made skirt and quickly stuffed it in her belt. "I hope you boys will be right behind me!" She grabbed on to the ladder and tried to make her way up. Unfortunately, the wind was whipping so hard she could make no progress.

Shrapnel continued to move and monologue. "Uncertain what had become of the attacking entity, the warforge persued the strange opponent behind the non-forged humanoids."

Rathan looked at Lealani, "Let me give it a try." He steadied himself and began a slow but steady climb muttering something under his breath. He was able to snake his way past Lealani and climb up to the top of the rail car. A quick look to the left and Rathan saw a rope connected to some sort of mechanism that was hooked to the car itself. To the right he sees a warforged running quickly towards the back of the train. Rathan pulls himself onto the top of the Rail. He has to really plant his feet to keep from falling over but does so successfully.

Jebber also decides to climb the ladder. "Pardon me, m'lady," he said as he made his way past her. He pokes his head up so he can see what's going on and decides to take a shot at the warforged on the roof. He points his hand and utters some words. A loud \*snap\* is heard and a crystal shard flies out of his hand. Unfortunately, the wind catches it and it sails wide right of the target.

On the other end of the car, Kolthak makes his way up the ladder and climbs on to the top of the Rail. Unfortunately, dwarves aren't as sure-footed on the tops of trains and he gets caught up in the wind and falls on his back.

As the warforged on the roof kept running, Ilyra and Lealani both started to climb to the roof. Ilyra barely made it as Lealani got up and was able to keep her balance. "It's out of my reach for a spell. Are we following?" she asked, the wind whipping her long hair around her face.

"Let's cut him off! Three atop the car, three inside!" Jebber yelled in response.

Lealani nodded and yelled back, "He's heading to the back of the train!" She started moving after the warforged, easily jumping to the next car. From there, she saw that there was only one car left. The warforged was about to hit a dead end. She caught movement out of the corner of her eye and turned to see Shrapnel and Rathan both right behind her.

Jebber shouts at the three atop the last car. "We'll take the interior and cut him off!" Unfortunately, his foot slipped as he was yelling and he had to grab on to the ladder for dear life. This time, more slowly, he made his way down the ladder and back between the rail cars. As he did, he looked down and noticed the train has started across a bridge. The chasm below seems to go down for miles. Jebber uttered a prayer. "Praise be to the Sovereign Divinity that guides my steps, may Your righteous path remain firm beneath my feet."

In the meantime, Kolthak had gotten sick of falling on top of the car. "To Khyber with this!" he yelled loudly as he tried to make his way down the ladder. Maybe he hit his head when he fell; maybe he had poor footing; whatever the reason, he couldn't get a steady footing on the ladder and couldn't make any progress down.

All the folks on top of the railcar chased the warforged, who had just seemed to realize he was at a dead end. He turned and looked at the enemies bearing down on him. He then looked down into the chasm below. As a defiant last act, the warforged looked at his pursuers and screamed, "Say hello to Bonal for me!" before throwing himself off the side of the train and into the large darkness below.

All three pursuers stopped immediately. Lealani looked quizzically at Rathan and asked in a frightened voice, "What the hell did that mean?"

### **Chapter 3: Sharn rain is a hard rain**

As the shocked heroes made their way down the ladders, Ilyra stopped to look at the device attached to a hook on the roof. It seems the warforged was wearing a belt that had a 10-foot rope attached to it. The other end of the rope went into a retracting device that latched to a hook on the roof. She picked it up and made her way back to the car.

She arrived to see everyone back in the car, surveying the damage.

"I don't suppose any of you can re-glaze the window?" asked Jebber. "If not, let's find a conductor and see if they've got a spare."

Ilyra turned red in the face and started pacing the floor, her hand gesturing dramatically. "Why is re-glazing the window a priority? Someone tried to kill, disable, or... *whatever* the warforged, and it could have been us. It obviously had something to do with Master Geldem, because of those 'last words.' What was that?!?!?! Am I the only one here really scared about it??"

Lealani put a hand on Ilyra's arm to calm her. "It may be upsetting but it's not a surprise. Why else would he call us all together? And the way he did it was rush, totally not like him. Still, we need to notify the engineers what happened here."

Shrapnel spoke. "Suspicious for good reason, he looked at the falling warforged as the train sped by. For what reason had he attacked, and why did he go after the other warforged who had been sitting completely alone? Did he get on the train normally, or did he jump on at some point? Why had he said what he said? Shrapnel turned to the others and asked..."

No one said a word.

"It should also be taken into consideration that someone among this group had more knowledge of the attack. It is not entirely incomprehensible that one of these individuals was, in fact, on the attacker's side... and had simply been denied an opportunity to show his true colors. The warforged became suspicious of those around him, though he kept quiet for now. If there was a villain among them, it may become imperative to remain quiet on the matter till the list of suspects could be narrowed down. The warforged appeared disinterested, and did not say anything at all to the idea that someone here might know more."

Lealani looked to the others than back to the Warforged and laughed. She spoke loudly in his direction, "You do realize you're malfunctioning, yes? Were you on your way to Geldam to be fixed?"

"Malfunctioning? How could she tell? Almost all physical signs of damage had been... hidden... under a fresh coat of paint. Perhaps she knew why the warforged was here by other means. Had there been any mention of his intentions? No... there were not. Perhaps she was in alliance with the other attacker. All things considered, there we should avoid raising any alarms. It would be appropriate to come up with a story then. Yes. A story..."

Shrapnel made a bunch of handwavy gestures, but didn't say anything.

"It looks like they bought it... with some luck. If the woman had some outside knowledge to claim that something said was a lie, it would be easy enough to dismiss. This way, it should be easy to test."

Shrapnel's monologues helped to break the tension in the car. With a sigh, Ilyra calmed down a bit and tried to rationalize the attack, but without any clear conclusions

"Let's see, the attacker knew about Master Geldem, and knew exactly what car to attack. It probably knew we were all going to see him. Now, I don't believe it thought we were as many as six, because as soon as it saw us all it ran away. Maybe it believed Master Geldem called for someone but not all of us? Maybe it knew why Master Geldem called us? Or maybe it wasn't really trying to kill us, but to scare us?"

While mumbling all those theories, Ilyra followed Lealani to warn the train engineers what happened. They were able to find one of the train employees and he apologized profusely for what happened. They gladly gave the group another car to stay in and blocked off the old one while they fixed it.

"Now what?" Ilyra asked as they got settled into their new car. "Shall we resume our intention to eat and talk about what happened over dinner?"

Kolthak spoke up gruffly. "I could do with a drink after that. And next time I'm staying in the bloody train!"

The group, sans Shrapnel, made its way to the dining car, hesitating slightly for any signs of attack. Once settled, Lealani decided to start the conversation.

"We might as well get to know each other better then. Where is everyone from?" she asked between bites.

Rathan spoke first, "I am from a small hamlet here in Breland that goes by the name Freebird. I am, err was, the blacksmith there."

"That's very interesting, is that a family business?"

"It is. My father taught me and his father taught him. My family is disappointed that I have chosen to leave and seek a life of adventuring."

Jebber spoke up. "Perhaps you'll return some day, with new insight. That's my plan, at least." The smile he gave Rathan could only be described as "gnomic".

"Perhaps. I would like to be able to return one day with enough to allow my family to live well for the rest of their days."

"Are times hard in your village?"

"Times are hard everywhere, are they not? The war has taken a toll on all."

Kolthak grimly nodded. "Some more than others though. Cyre took the worst of the brunt, and some Houses came out if it very well indeed."

"I wonder if we'll ever know the truth behind the ruin of Cyre," said Jebber. "My own home in Zilargo was largely untouched, though through the stories of many travelers I understand we were unusually lucky in being spared."

Lealani just nodded, making no comment on the talk of the war. She then smiled, "I suppose a life of adventuring is an exciting way to spend your days, rather than toil away in a hot forge. Me, I'm looking for some life experience." Her smile widened, "And some fun."

After a couple of more days travel, the heroes finally pulled into the Sharn rail station. For those of who had never been to Sharn before, the city was surely a sight to behold. Curtains of water fell from the sky as they traversed the labyrinthine walkways of Sharn. The stone and wooden paths wound around and between the towers and spires high above the ground, forming a complex latticework that could be very confusing on evenings such as this. The rain fell hard, running off higher walkways and balconies in drenching waves, making it difficult to see much more than a few feet ahead. The distant glow of everbright lanterns, barely visible in the soaking gloom, did little to light the paths on this warm, wet evening. They made your way towards the designated meeting place; a skybridge in the upper city.

Shrapnel began to speak. "As I arrived in this strange city of men, I pondered how it was that such perilous, high, strange structures could exist. What sort of technology could create such things in the same world that something like me might be created? How can such monoliths exist, and yet I sit here, perilously damaged beyond repair? I remained silent on the matter. Better not to reveal my naiveté and ignorance of such things to these strangers. Yes, I would follow them, without muttering single word, and wait for my opportunity to confront one Bonal Geldam."

Just as Shrapnel finished, Rathan shouted and pointed ahead of them. "'Look there! Someone just jumped off a skybridge!"

"What?" Lea whipped her head around to try and see what was happening. "Is it like the warforged that jumped off the train down the gorge a couple of days ago?"

"It was too dark to tell."

They ran as fast as they could to the skybridge, which spanned the distance between platforms attached to the sides of two different towers — Dalannan Tower and the Kelsa Spire. A body lay on the floor of the bridge, and they saw a mixture of rain and blood pooling around it. A leather satchel, still clutched tightly in the body's hand, lay in the expanding puddle of water and gore.

They moved up to the body and everyone immediately recognized him; it was Bonal Geldam, the one who had requested they all meet him in Sharn.

#### **Chapter 4: Fight for your right to parley**

Rathan cried out, "Master Geldam! Oh no! Can any of you heal? We have to help him!"

Jebber immediately knelt by Bonal's side and laid his hands upon him. "By the Host, be well!" Jebber's hands glowed with a white light but, unfortunately, Bonal did not move. "Wake up, friend. Wake up! Bonal? BOOOOONAAAAAAL!"

"I will call the guards," said Ilyra, looking around for guards but not straying too far from the group.

Shrapnel started to speak. "I odd feeling of excitement ran through my thoughts. Why would I feel such a strange anxiousness when seeing a friend on the ground in such a way? I held that thought in as I held my breath, in the way that only a warforged might."

As Ilyra made her way to look for guards, a cloaked figure suddenly sprang from below the skybridge and landed next to Jebber. The hood of the cloak slipped down to reveal a warforged with dark red eyes; a sign of readiness for battle. The battleaxe in its hand was also a dead giveaway that it wanted to kill him.

Lealani took one step forward and to her right, giving her clear site of the warforged. She cast *mage armor* and moved into position to prepare a *color spray*.

The bad warforged looked like it was about to attack Jebber and then noticed Shrapnel. It screamed out, "Die, you flesh-loving traitor!" and swung its battleaxe. It cut deeply into Shrapnel's frame, leaving him badly wounded.

Rathan took advantage of the warforged's attention being drawn elsewhere and slashed with his longsword. Unfortunately, the rain made it hard to see and his blow glanced off the enemy's metal hide.

Shrapnel began to speak. "Surprise! What is this? Another attacker! These people will likely be suspicious if I don't interpose myself!" He then tried to slam into the enemy but he, too, barely missed.

Kolthak cast *swift expeditious retreat* and moved around the outside to get a flank with Jebber. Unfortunately, he moved between the enemy and Lealani. He chopped at the warforged with his axe but, just like Rathan and Shrapnel, missed badly.

Ilyra moved to a clear position and cast *ray of enfeeblement* at the enemy but it, unfortunately, went wide. Ilyra screamed in frustration. "Damn you, stupid scrap metal!!"

Jebber touched Shrapnel and said, "Be healed, my clanky companion!" He then drew his dagger, prepared to defend himself if necessary.

Gritting her teeth at the dwarf that got in her way, Lealani casts her spell anyway, hoping the dwarf's will is stronger than the warforged.

Kolthak yelled at her, "Ye daft elf! What do you think you're doing?!?"

"I'm continuing what I started doing, perhaps you should consider before you get in my way next time," she replied calmly.

"Next time bloody say what you're planning!"

Luckily, Kolthak did not succumb to the effect of the spell. Jebber, who also happened to be in the way, and the enemy were not as lucky. Both fell to the ground unconscious.

Kolthak looked at the unconscious bodies, then at Lealani. "We need to work on your aim a bit I think." He took the weapons away from the downed enemy. "I think we'll want to question him when he wakes up..."

Rathan quickly disarmed the bad warforged before it recovered. "What did you do? It was powerful magic it seems," he said to Lealani.

"Tie it up!" Lealani said, obviously less calm than a few seconds ago. With rosy cheeks she knelt next to Jebber while addressing the others. "Well, I've actually never had to use a spell like that before, you know, in combat, surrounded by people. I'm glad it worked..." she paused while lifting Jebber's head off the ground and putting it on her lap, "...on him anyway." She pointed to the fallen enemy. She gave Jebber a few light shakes, trying to wake him up.

Rathan handed Lea a waterskin. "Here, pour some water on him. Maybe it will revive him."

"Thanks," she smiled at Rathan, before splashing some water on Jebber's face. It had no effect.

Kolthak started tying up the warforged. "Anyone want to give me a hand with this? And would someone take a look at the satchel Bonal was carrying while I tie this one up?" Rathan leaned over the body of Bonal and retrieved the satchel.

The satchel, obviously stylish and well made, contained quills and inks, six blank sheets of fine Karnathi paper, a wrapped apple, and a small, leather-bound book.

As everyone was busy doing their thing, two things occurred simultaneously:

- 1) Suddenly, out of the back of the warforged's head, a small metal ball popped out and seemed to sprout metal wings. It flew off suddenly and was quickly lost in the darkness.

- 2) Everyone heard voices over the sound of the pouring rain. "They're over here!" and "What did they do that man?!" make their way over the air. They also heard a shrill whistle, suggesting that the Sharn watch was getting close to their location.

"I wonder who's looking for us; perhaps friends of Bonal? The watch should be able to put this miscreant 'forged where he belongs," said Kolthak as he finished tying up the downed enemy.

"Oh \*\*\*\*, the watch! I hope they can't recognize me. Maybe I should come up with some sort of alias! One warforged looks like another, right? Maybe I'll claim to be tied-up-guy's companions! Yes, that way they will suspect me of one crime! No wait... these fools won't go along with that. I know! I'll attack them and yell something about fleshy fleshing flesh! Then they'll think I was in on the plan all along! Oh wait... that's right... I'm the only one they've attacked! That won't be too believable. Oh, I've got it! I'll be a secret agent from House Cannith, sent here to um... um... what would a secret agent do? Assassinate someone! I'm a secret agent of House Cannith here to assassinate the woman with the dragonmark! BRILLIANT! Yes, this story will work fantastically. I'll interject right away and start speaking before any of these buffoons can interrupt me!" Shrapnel stepped forward to the front of the group between them and the sounds of the watch and start grandiosely miming a ridiculous story without saying a word.

"And THAT is why I wanted to call the guards, before the 'angry mob' factor. What now? Run? Try to explain?" Ilyra said with her usual desperation in tense situations. She turned to Lealani "Are you strong with your Dragonmarked house? Enough to get us out of messy situations like this?"

"Perhaps," Lealani answered, wiping wet hair off her forehead, "I will try to talk to them. Of course, us all meeting him here will be rather suspicious. We may want to try to hide that book, it might have a clue." She glanced sideways at Shrapnel. "This malfunctioning warforged may get us in more trouble than us just being here. Someone should try to talk to it and ask it to stop... thinking."

Rathan turned to the warforged, "Warforged! We need you to be silent. Do not even think. Pretend you are non-functional until we say otherwise. It will be the only way to honor Master Geldam."

Shrapnel continued speaking. "It seems one of them doesn't like the part about the cheese golem? Well different tastes for different folks. Maybe he's right, I'll sit here and mind my own business. Let's see... I still have to clean out the lint between my armor plating, and there's that dent that I need to pop out from that last hit, and then there's the problems with the kneecap that haven't been fixed in forever. Oh, and the stay-puffed marshmallow man. I always wanted to meet him. Does he live in Sharn? Hrm. Or did I just dream that? Wait, do I dream? I don't think so? Maybe something else is broke. Damn. And just when I think Geldam is going to fix me up finally, he goes and gets killed. Why were other 'forged after him? Maybe they wanted to get fixed. No... wait... they killed him. Thus making that harder. What the hell is up with that? Man. And they always are trying to kill me? Well, I am imperfect. Maybe they wanted to make scrap out of me...."

"Yeah, let's try that. I believe is much easier said than done" Ilyra put Bonal's book in her backpack. "I don't believe anyone will bother check why a mage is carrying a book, right?"

Immediately after Ilyra put the book in her bag, they saw figures coming out of the dark rain. Two males and a female, wearing the green-and-black studded leather of Sharn's City Watch, emerged from the rain-drenched night. The leader, a powerfully built bald dwarf with a close-cropped beard, steps forward, leveled his crossbow in your direction. The small ball of arcane light, hovering just above and behind his left shoulder, illuminated the area. To each side, a human male and female stood with halberds at the ready. "Olladra's bloody nose!" the dwarf cursed. "By order of the Watch, drop jour weapons and explain yourselves!"

## **Chapter 5: To Friends New and Old**

Lealani looked up at the dwarf, not wanting to move and disturb her sleeping friend from her lap, "Someone has murdered our friend... poor Mr. Geldam. He summoned us here to meet with him and as we arrived we found him falling from above," she gestured up. "There was nothing we could do! Then we had an encounter with this warforged, obviously part of whatever evil plot is in motion."

The dwarf glared at her.

"I'll be askin' the questions here, lassie. I suggest ye shut yer mouth before ye say anything that may incriminate ye. I also suggest ye all put down yer weapons. Now. My name is Sergeant Dolem of the Sharn watch. We've had reports of fightin' and killin' here on the bridge. I see the reports ta be true. So tell me, what the hell is goin' on and why are there two dead bodies and a tied-up warforged?"

"There's only one dead body here Sergeant," Kolthak replied. "And he was dead before we got here. The other one is just sleeping on account of the spell that subdued the warforged that attacked us. We tied him up and disarmed him so he wouldn't attack again when he woke up."

Sgt. Dolem looked at the warforged. "And why did it attack you?"

"Ach, it didn't say. That was part of what we hope to find out when it wakes up. We were attacked by one on the train to Sharn, but I don't think it was the same one. Something flew out of this one's head and darted off though."

"We approached after we saw Master Geldam fall..., although we didn't know it was him at first," Lealani added.

As the group talked to Sgt. Dolem, people came out of the shops around the area and started talking to the other two officers. They took statements and eventually whispered something to Sgt. Dolem.

"It looks as if the witnesses coming forward can corroborate your story. So you have no idea why this thing attacked you or Mr. Geldam you said he was? How did you know Mr. Geldam?"

Kolthak said, ""He had contacted each of us, asking that we meet him today in Sharn, and paid our fare here. He gave no indication of why he wanted us to meet him."

Rathan pointed to the tied up warforged. "I do not know if this warforged had anything to do with Master Geldam's death, but it certainly was set on our deaths before the Lady here was able to subdue him with a spell."

Sgt. Dolem started taking notes. "How did you know Mr. Geldam?"

"Well Sergeant, I believe we all know him in different ways," said Lealani. "As for myself, Master Geldam was a tutor that my Auntie set up for me here in the city. My Aunt would be Mistress Elvinor d'Phiarlain if you would like to check the facts."

She looked down at Jebber. "He should be waking up any minute... I hope."

Both the warforged and Jebber stir at about the same time. The warforged looked up and its eyes glow red.

"Let me go, meatbags, or you will all die slowly and painfully." It's at this point that they realized the voice was feminine.

"Hah! Put down your weapons he says," Creamstack monologue. "Little does he suspect that I don't fight with a weapon! Yes, once again, my cleverness gets the better of everyone I meet! I'm brilliant!"

"Oooo, my head... by the Host, did we prevail? Why am I lying -- oh Heavens, pardon me, milady!" Jebber sputtered and sat up, pushing his wet, dark hair out of his face.

Lea blushed hard. "Not at all, it's well, partially my fault you were, er, knocked out. Okay, totally my fault. I hope you'll accept my apology?"

"Ah, well, we're all safe, and that's what counts. Um, who is this good dwarf?"

Lealani, embarrassed that the man did not accept her apology, wiped herself as she stood. "He's the city guard, they are asking what we know about Master Geldam's untimely...", her eyes shifted to her mentor's limp body and her lip trembled, "...demise."

"From my part" Ilyra said to the dwarf "I met Master Geldam a couple of years back when he was teaching at Morgrave University. You know, I studied there..."

"Begging your pardon, officer, I'm a bit, er, well rather flummoxed. Geldam spent some months doing research in Korranberg, and I was his assistant. We have only spoken through the mail since then." What color was in Jebber's face drained away. "And now he ... he's dead."

The sergeant took everyone's statements and put away his notepad. "Ok folks. I'm going to take your friend here back to the precinct and find out what's going on. We'll also take Mr. Geldam back to the morgue and contact his next of kin. Just don't leave town so I can find you if I need you." Sgt. Dolem and the other two officers leave you standing in the rain on the bridge.

"Well that went well. I suggest we see about finding somewhere to get dry on the outside and wet on the inside," suggested Kolthak.

Now that the immediate threat is over Lealani's eyes start to tear up. "T-that's a good idea," she sniffles.

"I agree to the idea of us going to some tavern or inn nearby" Ilyra said. "I would like to have a chance to examine Master Geldam's book more carefully"

As they discussed what to do next, a cloaked figure appeared out of the darkness, holding up a hand with a ring that bore a symbol which Ilyra recognized as belonging to House Cannith. "If you would know the truth of Bonal Geldam's murder, go to the Broken Anvil tavern at dawn."

Before they could ask any questions, the figure turned and disappeared into the darkness.

Kolthak spoke first. "Well, that was convenient. I suppose we should find a place to stay near the Broken Anvil. Anyone know where it is?"

"Am I the only one who thinks this is TOO convenient?" Ilyra asked. "whoever that was carries the symbol of House Cannith. On the cover of master Geldem's book was a symbol that reminds of House Cannith insignia. Another coincidence?"

"Of course not lass. This whole thing smells worse than a week dead goblin." Kolthak responded. Kolthak puts his axe away and pulls his cloak up a bit. "But I'd suggest we discuss the whole thing somewhere dry and warm."

"Let's get out of this rain and find some better light," Jebber suggested. "I'd like to take a look at that book as well."

Lealani wiped her wet hair off her face, "Any place will do to get out of the cold and rain. We can ask for directions to this Broken Anvil and check it out after we dry off. That warforged that attacked us was far from home, something far reaching is going on here."

Jebber put a comforting hand on Lea's shoulder. "Milady, do not despair. Bolan was wise, and he may have called us here because he knew of this very danger. He thinks we are fit to face it, and I trust his judgment. We will avenge him, and then (gods willing) we will bring him back."

"You may call me Lealani, or Lea if you prefer." Lealani smiled at the man, appreciative of his comfort. "What do you mean, bring him back? Surely that is far beyond any of our skills..."

Kolthak looked around to see if he can spot anything that looks like an inn nearby. "Are we going to keep standing in the rain all bloody night? Let's get in out of the rain, and then we can talk."

The group looked for a while and found an establishment with a Golden Horn on the sign. went inside and found an extremely nice foyer. The human female at the desk smiled at them as they entered. "May I help you?"

"I hope so lass. My companions and I are looking for a comfortable place for the night, and some good food and strong drink. Would you be having such things here?" asked Kolthak.

She smiled broadly. "But of course, sir. Would you like the standard room or did you have something more opulent in mind?"

Lealani smiled at the woman and raised a finger. "One moment please." Now that she wasn't distracted by dead mentors or boys she said in a low voice, "We're in the University District here." She tried to be delicate, "It's probably a little fancier than we'd like for tonight. Perhaps Den'iyas will be better for our needs..." she said, trying to prepare her new friends for the price of the room."

"I'm sure the standard will do well enough. How much for the room and dinner?" Kolthak asked the woman at the counter.

She answered, "Will you each want your own room? We have a lovely suite that will comfortably hold two people for a low price of 50gp per night. It's one of our most popular bargains!"

Jebber grappled with his own jaw to keep it from hitting the floor.

Shrapnel spoke. "Ah, the comforts of not needing to sleep, eat, or breathe. I'll just mind my own business outside and save a few coins. I wonder if these people have realized that I'm following them around and have yet to introduce myself. Hrm... Well then I guess I will!"

Rathan responded, "Did you say 50gp? I'm sorry and no offense intended, but where I come from you can buy a very nice house for that price." He turned to the others, "I think we would be better off to seek a more affordable housing."

"Yes, I believe I can lead us there, I've lived in the city on and off my entire life." Lealani turned to the girl at the counter and smiled. "Thank you but we've decided we need to be elsewhere."

She turned back to Kolthak. "I'm sure we'll find something to eat and drink there. It's the Gnomish section of the city." She tried to lead the group to a better spot for their needs.

"Hrm..." Shrapnel 'though' out loud. "I guess I should try to tag along wherever they end up going. A House Cannith connection might be able to get this horrible headache fixed..."

The group made its way to Den'iyas, the gnome neighborhood of Sharn. They found an inn by the name of the Bearded Goat, where rooms were a reasonable 2gp a night. Each room held two people, so it worked out to 1gp a night per person. Dinner consisted of a lot of different vegetables and a cup of gnomish wine and was included in the cost of the room.

"Delicious! Ah, it's just like home." Jebber regaled the party with stories about gnomish cooking, agriculture, and how each vegetable in their dinner got its name.

Lealani picked at her food, she had obviously lost her appetite and is hardily drinking the wine.

"So, it seems that fate has brought us together for a reason. I don't know about the rest of you but I intend to be there tomorrow morning to find out what happened to my...friend. Will anyone join me?"

"Aye lass," Kolthak affirmed. "You'll not be the only one seeking an answer. Should we perhaps take a look at his book to see if it has any answers for us?"

"Yes, let's take a look at that book," said Jebber.

Ilyra retrieve the book from her backpack and showed it to the group. It was a small journal, measuring about 3 inches by 6 inches and 1 inch thick. The cover was of dark brown leather with strands of mithral thread woven in a strange pattern. It bore no title, just the mithral-thread icon on the front cover. "I didn't have the chance to read it, but I did recognize this" she said as she pointed to the icon, a stylized anvil and hammer inside a circle "as a primitive version of the House Cannith seal. I have no idea what is inside. Shall we find out together??"

Ilyra opened the book. Inside, every page was blank, but the sheets had a strange feel; they didn't seem to be paper or leather, but something not readily identifiable.

"That's very odd. Let me take a closer look at that please," asked Kolthak as he reached for the book. His eyes became milky white and he studied the book more closely. After a few seconds, his eyes went back to normal. "Odd, there is nothing magical about this book."

Jebber frowned. "Perhaps we should check it for dweomers on the morrow. Uh, speaking of tomorrow, I assume we're walking into a trap? What kind of things should we expect? I'm somewhat new to this."

"It may be a trap, but perhaps not. I would think if the messenger had wished us harm he'd have attacked while we were occupied with the enemy warforged. Speaking of which, why are we being attacked by several warforged? Perhaps they are trying to hinder us from learning what our friend wished our help with," responded Kolthak. "I have some little experience in such matters. But since it's seeming less likely that he means us much harm, we don't need to go too far. I'd suggest though that we know where this Broken Anvil is and how to get there. And much as it pains me to say so, we should probably be there a bit before dawn so as to be waiting for our mysterious contact when he arrives."

"That's a good point. He could have harmed us gravely, or even hidden his signet ring. The warforged that attacked us do seem quite odd. I've never heard of a metal sparrow flying out of one's head, for example. We should get a sack to throw over the head of the next one."

"Could I see the book please?" asked Lealani. She took a closer look, especially feeling the pages. She opened the book wide and looked at the binding, verifying that they were indeed part of the book. She handed the book back to Ilyra.

Ilyra pulled the candle on the table over and placed a page over the top of it. The page didn't even burn.

"How odd. And it's non-magical, you say? How very odd." Jebber ponders for a moment. "Say. A terrible thought just struck me. It may be a bit late for this, but does anyone know where Master Geldam lived? I have his postal address, of course, from our correspondences... but I've never been to his home. Perhaps it would be wise to pay it a visit before agents of his enemy do. But then again, perhaps they already have. Of course, I can't imagine breaking into Morgrave University... so I suppose any inquiry will have to wait until morning."

Rathan pondered to the group, "I wonder if all warforged have little sparrow like things in their head. Maybe we should ask our companion. Despite his being somewhat 'broken' he may give us an answer."

"What a preposterously stupid question. Hrm... maybe he'll believe me if I just say 'yes' and go along with it..." replied Shrapnel.

"Does anyone have the alchemical skill to look the book over? Or what might happen if we pour some ink on these pages...?" asked Lealani.

"It's certainly worth a try, though I'd suggest writing something would be a bit more ... respectful." Jebber pondered for a moment more. "Perhaps it is somehow keyed to House Cannith. That would explain both the cover ornament and the source of the assailants. Though if so, I fear we're up against a mighty foe indeed."

"Cannith is not the only great House in the land. I say we wait till after we meet with the Cannith man we met tonight before we do anything permanent to the book. Perhaps the mysterious man will have some answers for us." Kolthak finished his food and drink, pushed his chair back and stands up. "I dinnae know about the rest of ya, but I'd like some sleep before greeting the sun to meet our mystery man."

"Kolthak, my friend, I hate to say that but I don't believe House Canith is responsible for our warforged enemies or Master Geldam's demise," Ilyra said. "All warforged were build by house Canith but not all still work for them. The warforged that attacked us had the mark of Karnath on her. Maybe they have something to do with it. But I agree that we can only find out what this really is on the morrow and well rested. So shall we finish dinner and go upstairs?"

Kolthak clumped upstairs and found his bed. He put his mail shirt over the foot of the bed as human sized beds are a bit long for a dwarf, and he made sure to keep his axe near at hand.

"I believe," Ilyra said, turning to Lealani "That since we are the only girls, we are going to share the room, correct?"

Lealani smiled. "Yes, sharing a room would be wise, especially considering we all may be in danger now. However, I think I will have another drink before bed. I will see you up there."

"Oh, I just thought, since the dwarf went to bed that we were all going," Ilyra said "Since you all are staying, I don't mind staying either."

"A flagon of something unusual, if you would, good barkeep," Jebber asked in gnomish. "Only five of us want rooms? I suppose that's alright. I'll take the lone room if nobody else wants it."

"You can always share a room with our thoughtful warforged friend," Ilyra tried to show a sarcastic smile.

After almost finishing her third drink, Lealani stood and gracefully stumbled, but only slightly, to the front of their table with her glass in hand. "Before I retire for the evening, I will, in Master Geldams honour, sing his most favorite song, the one he always asked me to sing for him. It seems more appropriate for him than some depressing farewell of a tune. I imagine in his mind he was a true romantic," she smiles. She cleared her throat and sang beautiful melody:

*A clouded dream on an earthly night  
Hangs upon the crescent moon  
A voiceless song in an ageless light  
Sings at the coming dawn  
Birds in flight are calling there  
Where the heart moves the stones  
It's there that my heart is calling  
All for the love of you*

*A painting hangs on an ivy wall  
Nestled in the emerald moss  
The eyes declare a truce of trust  
And then it draws me far away  
Where deep in the desert twilight  
Sand melts in pools of the sky  
When darkness lays her crimson cloak  
Your lamps will call me home*

*And so it's there my homage's due  
Clutched by the still of the night  
And now I feel you move  
Every breath is full  
So it's there my homage's due  
Clutched by the still of the night  
Even the distance feels so near  
All for the love of you.*

After her song, she raised her glass to the air and finished it.

"That was quite beautiful, dear Lady. I'm sure Master Geldam would be honored," said Rathan.

"Thank you good sir," she smiled sadly, "I think we'll all miss him." She paused, pondering before she turns back to Rathan.

"Care to escort us to bed then? It's rather late and we have an early morning. And perhaps we've had too much to drink."

"It would be my pleasure." Rathan escorted both ladies to their room, helping steady them if any get a little tipsy. "I will see you both on the morrow. Sweet dreams to you both." He gave a soft smile to Lealani and turned to go.

She returned his smile and gave him a little wave before shutting the door. Sighing, she said to Illyra, "He's rather handsome, no? And sweet."

## **Chapter 6: Meeting the First**

Jebber awoke before dawn for his morning devotions. After prayers, he made his way to the common room to wait for his companions. He was surprised to see Shrapnel. Before Jebber had a chance to ask what he was doing there, Shrapnel began to speak.

"Sleep... sleep... always with the sleeping. You know what, over the course of their entire lives they must sleep half of it away? And that probably, to them, seems perfectly normal. Time sure must travel quickly when you're only awake for half of it. What's with that business? Sometimes I wish I could just 'turn off' for a set amount of time myself, but I don't exactly have that feature... at least not in a functioning state..."

Eventually, the rest of the group arrived and, after getting directions from the innkeeper, made their way to the Broken Anvil, a tavern belonging to House Ghallanda located inside the Mason's Tower. Once there, Kolthak opened the door and looked around for anything suspicious. Seeing nothing out of the ordinary, he held the door open for his companions.

Lealani pulled the hood of her cloak up over her head. "This should be interesting," she commented in a soft, yet very curious voice, as she made her way inside.

As the group stepped inside, a halfling woman greeted them and asked them to follow her. She led them to a secluded table near the back of the common room.

"My Lady," the halfling said to the woman already seated at the table, "your guests have arrived."

The human female in the dark blue cloak had delicate features, dark blue eyes, and sleek black hair bound with silver and turquoise ornaments. She wore a signet ring of House Cannith on her right ring finger and spoke in a soft but clear voice.



"Thank you for coming. We have important business to discuss that relates to the unfortunate death of Bonal Geldem. Please, sit down."

Kolthak took a seat at the table. "It seems we do."

Jebber sat as well. "If you were a friend of Master Bonal, I would hear you."

Lealani slid her hood off, feeling safe enough, and took a seat. "Lady," she nodded to her, "It IS an unfortunate reason we are meeting here with you today. What can you tell us of this murder most foul?"

The woman introduced herself. "My name is Elaydren d'Vown of House Cannith." She pointed to glasses and three pitchers - ale, wine, and water - then got right down to business.

"I have been working with Provost Geldem to recover a family heirloom," Lady Elaydren explained. "We were to meet earlier tonight, but as you know, he never made it. I learned from the Watch what had transpired, and so sent one of my men to track you down."

She continued. "The heirloom, according to family legends, was locked away in a foundry that dates back to pre-Galifar Sharn. Poor Bonal believed he discovered the location of the foundry in an ancient House Cannith journal. I was going to fund an expedition to go to the site, but without Bonal. . ." Her voice trailed off, then she leaned in close. "Perhaps you would be willing to recover the heirloom for me; for a generous reward, of course."

"Lady d'Vown," said Jebber. "I owe Master Bonal much. I would undertake this task for no reward, other than his resuscitation. If such is beyond your current powers, could I ask that he be kept under *gentle repose* until such time as we return?"

"I will see what I can do," Lady Elaydren responded with a nod.

Kolthak spoke next. "I'm glad to know he was working with you. Do you know why he might have summoned us to Sharn to meet him at this time? What can you tell us about this heirloom and who might not want it found?" Kolthak paused to pour a glass of ale and drink a healthy slug. "Did Bonal give you the location of the foundry before his death?"

"I do not know why Bonal contacted you. Perhaps he feared for his life and needed help from old friends. The relic I seek is an adamantine plate in the shape of a seven-pointed star about the size of your hand," Lady Elaydren explained. "It has no special power by itself, but is an ancient schema—a piece of a pattern used by the Cannith artificers of old to craft unusual items. Recover this piece of history for us, and House Cannith will be extremely grateful. I know that the Lord of Blades has expressed interest in it for his own purposes."

"Do you have any idea why the Lord of Blades would be interested in this heirloom? Also, if we should recover it, how would we find you or can we simply deliver it to a Cannith enclave and have them see it reaches you?"

"I have no idea why he wants it, I just know that he does. Once you find it, you can bring it here to me. As for the location of the foundry, I know that he recovered a journal which should help pinpoint the location. Do you have it?"

"An ancient House Canith journal, you say?" Ilyra asked as she produced the journal from her backpack "You mean this one? The pages are blank... Do you know any way to read it?"

Lady Elaydren held out her hand for the book. Once she had it, they saw both her signet ring and the mithral threads on the cover glow in unison. She opened the book and the blank pages immediately began to fill with delicate script and line drawings. She turned to a specific page, studied it for a moment, and then pulled a folded map from inside her cloak. "The location of the

lost foundry is deep within the Dorasharn Tower," Lady Elaydren proclaimed. "Fifty-seven levels below the tower's present-day sewer system. I offer you one thousand gold pieces and the good will of my house if you recover the heirloom and return it to me."

Rathan nodded. "I will gladly venture into the bowels of Sharn to continue the work of Master Geldam. I do beg a small favor though, my Lady. While we embark on this quest, could you make some inquiries regarding any connection between the family Blackthorn and that of House Cannith? My father has spoken of family roots that tie to House Cannith and I would seek to know if that is true. I realize that the link may be fragile at best, but it is something I wish to find out."

"I will do what I can. But know that House Cannith's leadership has been disjointed since destruction of Cyre. I, myself, am loyal to Baron Jorlanna d'Cannith of Aundair. I do not know much about the Sharn-based family."

"I agree, Master Bonal's work is worth pursuing," Jebber responded in kind.

"Well it sounds like a good offer, and it's probably why Master Geldam summoned us in the first place," offered Kolthak.

"Good will goes far between houses, Lady," Lealani smiled. "Master Geldam must have had a reason to want to find this, he isn't exactly a treasure hunter after all. Something more... and perhaps that is why he called for us." She looked over each person in the group, her eyes settling on Rathan. "Curious as to why he chose each of us specifically though." She smiled then looked back to the Lady. "I can't see how we can do anything but follow this through, for him. We will need some provisions and additional information about the Dorasharn Tower though. Where do you suggest we go for that?"

Lady Elaydren responded, "Dorasharn Tower is one of the oldest towers in Sharn. The inhabitants of the tower live from the middle section and up. Below them, very far below them, is the Rat's Market, a place to go if you need to buy items that end up in the sewers. You'll need to find a way to get under the sewers." She pointed to the map. "The map shows that Valve Cluster E-213 is where you need to enter the sewers in order to get below them."

"I suppose we should procure torches and such? Will we need rope?" Jebber asked.

"I have no idea," answered Lady Elaydren.

"Could ye make us a copy of your map? It might make it easier for us to find the way and retrieve your heirloom," asked Kolthak.

Lady Elaydren handed him the map. "It is yours. I just need it back when you're done with it."

"Well, I think that's everything then," said Kolthak as he stood up.

"My concerns are answered, though I'd like to do a bit of shopping before we begin," said Jebber as rose.

Lealani spoke up excitedly. "Well then, when should we set off our on little adventure? I admit, I've never been actual *adventuring* before. I'm more a 'tell the tale' kind of girl. Should be exciting."

Kolthak looked at her very seriously. "Well lass, I think we're ready after a trip to tae store for Jebber here. No sense wasting time especially since someone else is looking. And lassie, don't worry about your first adventure. I'll give you the same advice my father gave me before mine."

"When trouble starts, it'll hard to think, so just try to remember one thing above all else. Dinnae get killed!"

"Indeed. The other thing to remember is to not get one of us killed either." Rathan said with a grin. Hoisting his backpack on his shoulder, "I have plenty of provisions for adventuring so we should be set should we encounter a need for rope or such."

Lealani blushed hard, obviously this was a dig at her poorly aimed spell earlier. She cleared her throat and said seriously, "I'm sure one of you strapping men can help me along with that."

"Dinnae worry lass, I think we'll all work to make sure we all get through this alive. Except maybe the malfunctioning warforged; I cannae make any guarantees about what it will or won't do." Kolthak finished his ale. "Just try to stay back from anything hostile and you should do fine. I'd say ye could take shelter behind me but," Kolthak smiled at her, "but I'm a bit short for that!"

Lealani cracked a smile. "I'd be happy to stand behind you any day master dwarf. I think that's quite a fine plan! Well, if we think we have what we need or can grab it quick, let's go. I'll be needing a nap later; I'm not used to getting up so early," she grinned.

The group took their leave of Lady Elaydren, purchased their supplies, and made their way to Dorasharn Tower. Once inside, they took the stairs down, down, down to the sewer level. The tunnels and corridors at this level of the tower were narrow and dark. An occasional window slit looked out upon the crowded walls and foundations of other towers, and infrequently placed torches sputtered here and there, giving off pallid pools of light and clouds of smoke. Even so, rough and dirty people crowded the narrow corridors, and the smell of sweat and sewage permeated the stale air.

One tunnel opened onto a large chamber, where a mix of goblins, humans, and shifters gathered around a small pile of garbage spread across three rotting blankets. One of the goblins shouted, "No pushing! No pushing! There's always enough for everyone at the Rat's Market!"

## **Chapter 7: Now where is that door?**

Kolthak looked around warily. "I think we'll not want to linger here overlong." He started looking for anything that looks like a valve cluster. He saw a lot of tunnels leading off to different places, but no valve clusters.

Jebber looked around slowly, on his face a guileless expression of wonder. "How remarkable, that people and ... other people can eke out trade together in such a place."

Kolthak broke out the map and tried to make sense of where the cluster was in relation to their current location. Unfortunately, the map simply led from the cluster itself to the location of the foundry, not to the cluster itself from the sewers.

Jebber's voice, coming from the nearest stall, seemed a bit too loud. "Hello, my good merchant! Might you have a recent map of the area for sale? I fear mine may be out of date."

Jebber was standing at a stall run by a dirty halfling. His wares were dirty and, at first glance, didn't seem very useful. He smiled at Jebber's approach. "Why would you need a map, my good sir? I have everything you need right here! What is it you're looking for? I'm certain I can provide it!" He gave Jebber a dirty grin.

"We're looking for the remains of another group who was down here investigating rumors of trouble by a couple of the valve clusters. So if you happen to have an up to date map of nearby valve clusters, I'll be glad to compensate you for it. If you know of any recent trouble around any specific valve clusters, I could possibly compensate you for that as well."

The halfling smiled even wider. "But of course I do! What kind of merchant would I be if I didn't have a map of the clusters down here. I don't happen to have one on me but I could get you one for, say, 10 gold pieces."

"What is your name, friend? I'll give you two gold for the map, one gold for the rumors, and six gold more on our way back if both prove accurate. Also, you will be first to know of any new dangers encountered on our route."

"Stainez, my friend. My name is Stainez. I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask for the money up front. It's better for business that way, dontcha know? Lots of people you can't trust down here."

"I understand completely. Three for the map, two for the rumors. If we come back alive, first dibs on the information will still be yours, Stainez."

"5 for the map and 2 for the rumors," Stainez counter offered.

"Four for the map, two for the rumors. Did you want first dibs on our return information, or are we to sell that elsewhere?"

"Deal, good sir! Cash up front, of course." He held out a dirty palm.

"Cash up front means before we depart, not before we see the map, my friend Stainez."

Stainez frowns. "But that wasn't the deal, sir. I said cash up front and you agreed. We have an arrangement and I expect you to keep up your end of the bargain."

"My friend, you are keeping something from me. I would know what it is. Honesty is a precondition to any bargain. Yours is beyond reproach, is it not?"

"Of course it is, friend. Which is why when you agreed to 'cash up front' I trusted you. Now it seems you are nothing but a liar and a swindler. I would ask that you leave my stall so that others may peruse my wares."

Kolthak drifted over to where Jebber is talking to the halfling. "So lad, are you having better luck than I did? Not too hard to manage though."

"I thought I'd found a likely source, but this fellow is trying to strongarm me into paying for a map he doesn't have. Perhaps we should try our luck elsewhere. What do you think?"

Kolthak looked at the halfling, then back at Jebber, with an odd look on his face suggesting disbelief at the claim of him being strongarmed by an unarmed halfling less than half his size. "My good halfling, what seems to be the trouble? I can hardly believe that a merchant such as yourself would sell something you don't possess..."

"I never would do that, friend," answered Stainez. "I just expect my customers to be honest and keep up their end of the bargain. 'Money up front' is not a new concept. Regardless, it is done and I ask that you both leave so that I can attend to other customers."

"Ah well, we shall just have to spend our coins elsewhere. I'm sure there are those here willing to trade information for gold..."

On the other side of the stall, Shrapnel was talking to himself. "Maybe I should attempt to strong arm this fellow then... let's see... I could threaten to eat him. That might work. Or maybe I should try to convince him in a more subtle manner, perhaps implying that I'm a wanted warforged..."

Lealani, who had been hovering near the stall, spoke up angrily. "How much is that thing you are arguing about?"

"Six gold pieces, ma'am," answered Stainez.

"Here, I pay. Show the damned map now!"

"Thank you, friend! Now, I don't have the map on me but I will have it tomorrow morning. Be back at dawn sharp and I will bring you your map."

"We'll see you here then," Kolthak said as he turned towards the rest of the group. "Shall we look around a little and see if we can find any valve clusters while we wait for the next day? Or we can always ask around a little more to see if anyone can help us find it without a map?"

"We can wait until tomorrow or start look around again. I'm not much of a people person, but I will help anyway I can," said Ilyra.

Jebber looks from Koltahk to Ilyra. "I do hope we haven't just bought him a nice vacation somewhere. I felt he was concealing something."

"You worry too much! His shop is still here, and I'm sure he knows better than to try and cheat a dwarf." Kolthak shrugged. "Besides, Lady d'Cannith offered us a thousand gold for this heirloom, what matter a half dozen or so?"

Kolthak looked around the area a little, remembering his unsuccessful attempts at information gathering when an idea occurred to him. "I thought of something. That fellow over there with the spread of stuff, the Rats Market I think it was called? I'd bet get got those things from the lower parts of the tower. He probably knows where to find the valve clusters, or knows someone who does. Let's go find out."

As they looked around, a male goblin waved them over to his wares. "I've got a rare stick of sealing wax, only partially used, for a mere sixty coppers," the goblin merchant says. "Or maybe you could use this fine woolen blanket with just a hint of mildew? Only thirty-nine coppers. How about a skewer of boiled rat meat? For you, just five silver. Or, perhaps, if I could point out the way to a certain valve cluster, what would it be worth to fine explorers such as yourselves? One hundred silver?"

Kolthak walked over to the goblin and his wares. "Boiled rat? I've usually seen it fried, how's it taste boiled? You know where to find the valve cluster we seek? How do you know which we seek?"

Jebber meandered over at the mention of exotic food. "I'll try the boiled rat. Always interested in local specialties."

They each handed five silvers to the goblin and he gave them each what looked to be a boiled gray meat. "I might have what you seek. But it will cost you. How much are you willing to pay?"

While the two were eating rat, Lealani scanned the crowd. She noticed one of the people, someone who looked like a shifter, staring at the group pretty intently. Once he saw that Lealani has noticed him, he turned and walked off down the nearest tunnel.

She turned to the group, "Did anyone else see that rather shifty fellow staring at us so intently? I wonder who he is..."

"Miffy mooking femmow?" Jebber asked through a mouth full of rat. He choked down the last of the rat boil, wiped the grease from his fingers, and got ready to run.

"Are we going after him?" asked Ilyra.

"Going after who?" asked Kolthak. "I didn't see anyone; besides, we need to remember what we're doing here anyway." He turned back to the goblin. "You said you might have the answer we seek? Why don't you tell me what you are offering, and I'll tell you what it's worth to us."

"I charge you 100sp for the information," answered the goblin.

"For that price you'll tell us how to find the cluster we seek?"

"Of course. I take you there myself."

"That sounds quite fair, but let me check with my companions to ensure they are ready." Kolthak turned to the rest of the party. "This excellent goblin has offered to take us to the valve cluster we seek. I suggest we go along with him as he only wants 100sp to take us there."

"Here," Rathan reached into his pouch, extracted 10 gold, and handed it to Kolthak. "This better be worth it."

"There is no reason for only one to bear this expense, we all stand to gain from it." Kolthak handed Rathan back six of the gold pieces and replaced them with ones from his own pouch to hand to the goblin. "I'm afraid we don't carry such a quantity of silver with us, so I hope this will do as well."

"This will do nicely. Follow me." The goblin folded up his blanket and started walking. He led them through numerous twisting and winding tunnels. While not numerous enough to get lost, it would have taken a very long time to find it on their own. Eventually, he pointed out a narrow passage that led to a staircase that descended deeper into the tower. E-213 was stamped into the archway above it. "That lead down to valve cluster E-213. You on your own now."

"This does indeed look like where we need to be. I thank you for your assistance, and will see you when we return." Kolthak handed the goblin another five silver in thanks.

After he left, Kolthak spoke up. "Well, is everyone ready to continue our explorations?"

Jebber answered, "I'm ready. But, uh, it concerns me a bit that he knew which cluster we were after without being told."

"What the hell have I gotten myself into?" Shrapnel wondered aloud. "I'll follow behind these monkeys, so as that I will be able to retreat if it comes to that! However, I'll inform them that I'm just...watching their backs! BRILLIANT!"

As they climbed down the stairs, Ilyra thought she saw a glint of metal out of the corner of her eye. Suddenly, a warforged appeared from the shadows, his rapier piercing the air with deadly

efficiency. As he landed directly behind Shrapnel, he growled, "You have the provost's journal!" It's obviously not a question. "Give the book to me, and you can live to see another day. Refuse, and we will make your deaths slow and painful." He attacked Shrapnel but his blow missed by mere inches. Ilyra, not being surprised by her foe, raised her crossbow and fired but the bolt went wide.

As the group made ready to fight, they all heard the sounds of metal scrapping on metal and a lot of splashing. The water near the bottom of the stairs moved as something obviously just fell into it.

"Not another one! I'll take care of whatever is in the water!" Kolthak yelled as he kept an eye on the water, ready to attack anything hostile that climbed out.

Ilyra once again fired at the warforged but missed. Shrapnel raised his fist and yelled, "Why is it always me you ugly metal bastards?" before connecting with the enemies face.

Lealani cast a *daze* spell on the warforged. It shook its head and just seemed to stand in place. Jebber decided at that moment to fire a crystal shard at the warforged but missed as well.

Once again, they all heard the sounds of metal scrapping on metal and a lot of splashing. The water near the bottom of the stairs moved again as something obviously fell into it.

"Way to go! Pound that cursed metal troublemaker into scrap! And you in water, I hope ya stay there till ya rust, it'll save me the effort of smashing you into pieces!" Kolthak shook his axe threateningly, ready to bash whatever came out of the water.

Rathan kept an eye on the water and shouted, "Hit it hard, Shrapnel!"

"What the heck is in the water there?" Lealani yelled out.

Ilyra once again fired her crossbow but has a hard time aiming it through Shrapnel's movements and misses.

Suddenly, two feral looking shifters came charging around the corner, ready to strike!

"Come get it ya furry bastard!" Kolthak took a swing at the first one to approach! His axe connected with the enemy's side, opening a deep gash. It let out a howl as it was badly wounded.

"Trying to surprise us? It won't work fiendish being!" Rathan stabbed at the same the furry that Kolthak hit. He easily connected and it fell in a heap, bleeding profusely. The other shifter stepped up and clawed at Kolthak. Unfortunately for the shifter, the blood on the ground made it hard to get firm footing and he slipped up, missing Kolthak.

At the same time, Shrapnel's punch caught the warforged in the jaw, sending it to ground swiftly. Suddenly, a small ball of metal detached itself from the warforged, sprouted winged, and flew

off into the tunnels, away from the party. Jebber attempted to hit the ball with a crystal shard but missed the tiny metal item.

Once again, the party heard the sounds of metal scrapping on metal and a lot of splashing. The water near the bottom of the stairs moved as something obviously fell into it.

The shifter growled and swiped at Kolthak with both claws. Unfortunately, one of them landed a stinging blow to Kolthak arm.

"Why ye furry faced bastard!" Kolthak took a swing at the shifter with his axe. "Take that!" The shifter's head separated from its body and it collapsed.

"Good swing, Kolthak." said Rathan approvingly.

Lealani also nodded. "But are you alright? You took a nasty hit. Also..." she moved down the step towards the water and peered into it where the sound was coming from. "What was that?"

"Be careful, my Lady. I fear we are not alone down here." said Rathan as he put his hand on Lealani's arm.

A quick chill shot up Lealani's bare arm as Rathan laid his hand there. His respect and concern for her were both very... attractive. She smiled up at him. "Thank you Rathan, I will be certain to be careful."

"Aye, I should probably take care of this injury before we press on. I may need that arm yet." Kolthak used his foot to scoop the decapitated head into the water.

"Let me see that wound, friend," said Jebber as he cast *cure light wounds* on Kolthak.

The group looted the bodies and took whatever supplies were necessary. This place was going to be a lot more difficult to survive than any of them had imagined.

"What a terrible and disgusting place," Ilyra wondered "Hey Kolthak, nice bolts you found. Do you mind if I keep them? I don't see anyone else using a crossbow."

Lealani peered into the passageway and saw a tunnel to the left that goes on for a while. A few seconds later, one of the grates on the side walls lifted up and sewage poured through into the water.

"It's the sewer grate, I guess. There is a big tunnel here too. I don't particularly want to be walking through the muck... do we need to continue this way?"

"I think so. Kolthak, care to take lead again?" asked Rathan.

"Is anyone still in need of healing?" Jebber asked.

"Thank ye for the healing, nice to have the bleeding stopped." Kolthak moved past Lealani to take the lead after dumping the decapitated shifter corpse in the water to see how deep it was. It was shallow enough that he was able to move through it reasonably well without swimming. He took the lead and started moving towards the T at the other end hallway.

They made their way through the muck. When they got to the intersection, they looked left and then right. To the left, they saw another large grate. It was obvious they weren't going that way. To the right, they saw the tunnel continued for a distance but there was a hatch on the left wall. They made their way toward it. The circular metal hatch, set into the tunnel wall and engraved with arcane runes, was the sealed door that Elaydren told them about. In the middle of the hatch, a glowing circle of mithral depicted the same icon as on Bonal's journal—the ancient symbol of House Cannith that predated the founding of the Kingdom of Galifar itself, a stylized anvil and hammer.

## **Chapter 8: The Door and the Darkness**

"Unless we figure out how to get that door open, our journey will be short," muttered Rathan as he stared at the door.

"I'll look at it," Lealani stepped forward and concentrated on *detecting magic* on the hatch. A few moments passed as she studied the door.

"It's not trapped, however, there is a magical aura of some sort. I don't think anyone here is powerful enough to dispel it though. It may just be....," she paused for a moment, tapping her lips as she pondered. "Let's find out." She touched the door.

As she did, the door glowed for a split second and, suddenly, three orbs materialized out of thin air and shot towards her. All three hit and sizzled on her skin causing major damage and knocking her down. The door stopped glowing. "Ouch," she said feebly.

Rathan leaned over to give Lealani a hand up, "Are you hurt?"

She took his hand and let him pull her up. "Owww, yes. Very. That probably wasn't smart but I thought I would be fast enough to get out of the way. At any rate, I need some time to catch my breath before we go on."

"You are injured, milady. If I may?" Jebber cast *cure light wounds* on Lealani and her wounds disappeared.

"Does anyone have another idea to get past the door? Is there something in Master Geldam's journal about it?" Rathan asked the group.

"If the ward is discharged, perhaps we open the door by conventional means?" Jebber attempted to open the door in the most obvious way.

As soon as Jebber laid a finger on the door, it quickly glowed bright and three balls of acid shot at him. One of them missed and sizzled on the ground. The other two hit solidly. The door stopped glowing.

"It seems it was not in fact discharged," Jebber observed.

"Thank you for the healing, Jebber. And no, I don't think the door is discharged. I would suggest not touching it again." Lealani said, stating the obvious to everyone. "There must be something in the book, maybe a password of sorts. Let's take a look before more of us get fried. Maybe we need to hold the book up to the door and it's a key or some sort?"

"The book responded to a Cannith signet, no? Do we have a sign or sigil of that House?"

"Let's see what the map and the book can tell us," Kolthak said as he looked at the map. It gave no indication on how to open the door.

"Well the map was no help." Kolthak rolled up the map and put it away before turning to Ilyra. "Lemme see the journal for a moment, would you? He flipped through it looking for information about wards. Seeing no writing on the pages, he held the book in front of him and closer to the door. Nothing happened.

"Well...here goes nothing..." he said as he, very hesitantly, touched the Cannith sigil on the book to the one on the door.

The moment the book touched the hatch, the sigils on the hatch glowed brightly. They saw the bars that were holding the hatch closed move out of the way and the door slowly opened outward. A blast of warm air came from within. Inside, it was pitch black. They saw a small room with a hole in the floor. Looking through the hole, they saw a shaft that descended downwards into darkness.

Kolthak breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank the Host, I was afraid that wouldn't work. Well my friends, let's get through this door before it shuts."

"Excellent work," Lealani smiled as she squeezed Kolthak's arm. "Looks like we're going down," she said, stepping through the doorway.

Peering down into the hole, Rathan said, "Could be a long way down. I'll dig out my rope."

Kolthak spoke. "Perhaps we should see about taking a bit of a rest before venturing further as most of us are wounded, and given our current experiences, are likely to encounter several more hostile warforged..."

"That IS a good idea, I am not feeling my best myself," said Lealani.

"Perhaps a rest would be good. Can we shut this door so we aren't surprised from more than one direction?" Rathan asked. After studying it for a few moments, they decided the door was easily closable. Jebber lit his lantern.

"A watch order then? So the sleeping can rest comfortably?" suggested Lealani.

Kolthak replied, "If I remember correctly, the warforged don't sleep so he may be able to keep watch for everyone."

Lealani quirked an eyebrow and looked him in the eye. "Is it wise to leave the malfunctioning and obviously... unfeeling towards us fleshy peoples in charge of all of us while we rest?"

"Perhaps you're right," said Kolthak. "However, you and Jebber are the most in need of rest as you are the worst injured and have both spent of your magical energies today."

Lea nodded then slid down against the wall. "I should watch first so I can reverie uninterrupted after that. I hope I can sleep, this isn't very comfortable," she complained.

"I can take the first watch with Shrapnel and Lealani," offered Rathan.

"Clearly they trust me... perhaps too much. What would they think if I perchance pondered the perilous pontification of performing a pitiful parlance with the praetorean positables? Or worse? What if I really was just another agent like the other sixteen warforged that have attacked so-far? Hah! That would be quite funny, I think," Shrapnel "thought" to himself.

"You can't be another agent, my pondering companion," said Rathan. "Why would they try to kill you first if that were the case? Furthermore, Master Geldam placed his trust in you, which is good enough for my trust."

"What is that idiot talking about? I didn't say anything to him," said Shrapnel.

"Have we discussed getting him fixed?" Lealani nodded towards the warforged. "He's a good ally in this fight, if ally is what he is, but this inner talking thing could use some...work."

Jebber, who had been busy healing the group, spoke last before they rested. "There, that's the last of my readied Orisons. I'll take watch with anyone."

Luckily for them, the rest of the night passed uneventfully.

Once everyone was awake, Rathan offered the use of his rope. "Shall we pack it up and head down the shaft? I can secure a rope to make the climb easier."

"Ready when you are," answered Jebber. "With a rope this won't be much harder than rappelling through the stacks back in Korranberg, though it was less slimy there."

Rathan secured the rope to a piton in the wall and then tossed it down the shaft. He lit a torch and said, "Ready?"

"I'll go first, I have a feeling I'm the most dexterous of this bunch," Lealani said with a grin. "It'll help if someone else holds the light though, in case of trouble."

The vertical shaft was a mix of crumbling earth and ancient stone, and centipedes and other insects covered the walls like living decorations. The long descent took them deeper into the bowels of Dorasharn Tower. Soon, the shaft began to angle, and by bracing themselves they could actually walk along one of the surfaces. Farther still and the shaft became a tunnel and the footing was no longer difficult to maintain or treacherous.

The tunnel eventually opened onto a vast chamber, though it emerged about six feet above the floor. No one could see the distant walls in the darkness, and the ruins of nearby walls and building appeared as deep shadows in the eternal tower night, but they could feel the change in air currents and pressure that indicated a large open space ahead of them.

"This looks very interesting, sorta like back home. Let's see where we need to go after we get on the ground," Kolthak looked at the map to determine their present position and where to go next.

It showed the House Cannith foundry as being in the northwestern corner of this chamber, roughly 1500 feet from where they were standing.

"Well group, according to this our destination is about 500 yards that way," Kolthak pointed towards the northwest corner of the cavern. "Shall we go do and get what we came for?"

"Absolutely, let's go," Lealani answered.

Jebber poured a pint of oil into his lantern and lit it. "Let's go."

Lealani took the lead, walking towards the large chamber that lay before the party.

"Be careful, my Lady," cautioned Rathan as they made their way into the darkness.

## **Chapter 9: The Forge is Found**

As the party moved forward, a constant background noise rose from walls and ruins around them. It took a moment to recognize, but eventually the sounds of chittering and buzzing could be picked out from among the cacophony. It was not unlike the sound of insects in the King's Forest, except that the chamber seemed to amplify and echo the noise in disturbing ways.

Continuing into the blackness, a dark carpet suddenly slid across the dusty floor and moved toward them. No, not a carpet, but a mass of squirming, chittering, shiny black beetles that were moving with a hungry purpose.

"Who's got a great idea here? Some way to spread the torch fire around?" Lealani asked, before casting *mage armor* on herself. Ilyra also activated her *mage armor*.

"I don't have to outrun the swarm... I just have to outrun some of the fleshbodies," proclaimed Shrapnel.

Jebber detached a pint of oil from his backpack, hefting the heavy liquid. "Oil's ready, someone prepare to ignite it!"

"I will do it, I'm in the front anyway," said Lealani. She reached out to Rathan and said with a grin, "If you do not protest," and took the torch from him, knowing he wouldn't. "It may be wise to find another one of these, just in case. And pointy blades don't look to do well here, bashing may be better."

Ilyra drew her own vial of oil and threw it at the swarm, hitting it squarely. "I think I got them. Lealani, NOW!!!"

Lealani threw her torch at the group and they lit up, casting moving shadows throughout the cavern. This did not stop their approach, however.

"Good throw, Lealani!" complimented Rathan.

"Thank you *mellon*, now it's your turn to be in the front!"

Rathan turns to Jebber, "Did she just call me a melon?"

"What the hell, it's worth a shot..." Shrapnel says as he stomps on the bugs that aren't on fire. They seem to take the message and break up, scattering to the darkness.

"By the Host, burnt beetles smell disgusting. I'm just glad we ate earlier," coughs Jebber.

Lealani turned to the group. "*Lle ume quel* everyone. Are you alright Jebber? You seem full of cough lately."

"I'll be fine, milady, it's just a tad"\*cough\*"more dank than I prefer."

"Ah, yes, it is quite... unrefreshing down here. Let's get what we came for then and be done with it, although I imagine we have more tests to overcome first before we can accomplish our goal."

"Damned bugs. Ah well, probably not the only creepy-crawlies we'll see down here. Shall we press on?" asked Kolthak.

Jebber answered. "Lead on, master Dwarf."

Rathan lit another torch. The group slowly made its way towards where its goal. Shadows flickered as the light from the torches and lanterns played against the ruins that were scattered about. From the shadowy rubble to the right of the group, Rathan thought he heard something moving. He pointed to the rubble and he, Jebber, Ilyra all saw shadowy figures moving in their direction, obviously trying to hide from view. They couldn't make out what they were. Suddenly, two hideous creatures that looked like demonic rats jumped out of the shadows!

Shrapnel was the first to speak. "OOOH! A doggie! I just want to pet it!"

"Wretched things! Know your place in the food chain!" Jebber yelled as he drew his cold iron dagger.

Lealani let go with a bright cone of energy that washed over both rats. They both suddenly fall over, as if in a deep sleep. After that, they finished them easily.

"Well, that wasn't too bad," Lealani said, swiping her hands together if that was easy work. She didn't want to admit to the others how pleased she was that her spells were working in practical situations. "Let's keep going." Lealani continued to lead the way in the direction they were heading.

The group eventually made its way to a large building that, for its age, was in pretty good shape. As they walked around its outskirts, they saw that it was completely intact. The double doors on the western wall were large and looked to be made of thick, black metal. The same icon that was on the cover of Bonal's journal spanned both side of the doors.

"Well, I guess this is the place. Let's see if these doors open the same way as the rest." So saying, Kolthak touched the symbol on the journal cover to the symbol on the door. Nothing happened. "Well, that's a bit odd. Lass, would you mind checking this door for traps before any of us give it a push?"

"Certainly," Lealani said as she searched the door for traps. After a few moments of studying the door thoroughly, Lealani stepped back from it. "There are no traps, per say, but there is a magical effect, an arcane lock spell. I do not have the means of unlocking that." She was still surprised no one has wondered why a singer would have the skills to search for traps and pick lock, but she knew better than to question her luck.

"Perhaps we should look for another way in," Rathan suggested.

"We could do that. Or Ilyra might be able to do something with that spell, I'm not sure. There may be a key of some sort – a word - that opens it. But we'd have no way of knowing it unless it's in the book or they were silly and wrote it on the wall somewhere around here." Unfortunately, Ilyra shook her head. She had no spell for the current circumstances.

While the rest of the group stared at the front door, Rathan walked around the perimeter of the building and looked for another way in. While he didn't see any openings, he did notice that the walls looked like they'd be easy enough to climb if they were so inclined.

"Well now, that's an obstacle. Let's see if that book tells us anything." Kolthak looked through the journal for anything about this room. Of course, the book was still blank. "It was too much to hope that the book would give us a password. It seems odd that they go to the trouble to lock the door but make it easy to get in through the roof. Anyone want to climb up and take a look?"

Rathan volunteers. "I can climb up and look." He easily climbed to the roof and noticed a very large hole in the northwest corner. "I've found a way in. There's a large hole here in the roof," he yelled to the group.

"Part of the roof collapsed?" Kolthak shook his head sadly. "All the powerful wards and locks you like, but if you let the building collapse it doesn't help ya much." He looked at the rest of the group. "Well, everyone up for a climb? I can stay for last in case any more beasties come calling while we're climbing."

"Sounds like a good plan." Lealani tried to climb up the building the way Rathan did and found it easy enough to do so. After a few minutes, everyone was on the roof.

Kolthak made his way to the hole in the roof and looked inside the building. A large chunk of the ceiling had fallen in, crushing cabinets and shelves beneath the weight of brick and stone. The remains of what appeared to be a metal dog that was also caught in the falling stones jutted from the debris. Dusty shelves, intact, line the southern wall, and a huge forge and furnace filled the eastern part of the room. Neither appeared to have been used in centuries.

"Well, I don't think this will be so easy to climb. Let's see if we can find something to tie some ropes to so we can make things easier on ourselves." Kolthak looked for something secure to tie a couple of ropes to by the hole, with the hopes of being able to use the ropes to rappel or as a brace against the climb rather than just having to shimmy up the ropes. He found an area to tie off the rope and tugged on it after. It held firm. He looked up at the rest of the group. "Well, it looks like the rope should hold. Let's see what's down there." He started to descend into the building and Rathan followed.

As they made it down to the bottom of the rope, two sets of red eyes appeared in the darkness. Out of the shadows approached two mechanical dogs, each growling menacingly.

Kolthak jumped off the rope and moved out of the way for others to climb down. "Get down here! There are Iron Defenders down here; constructs and they don't look friendly!"

Kolthak let loose a wave of color that washed over both creatures but seemed to have no effect on them. Both beasts moved up. One of them bit at Rathan but its teeth hit on a piece of shattered table instead. Kolthak was not as lucky and teeth sank into his flesh.

"Oh look, doggies! I want one!" Shrapnel said as he descended the rope.

Ilyra moved to the edge of the hole and fired with her crossbow but missed wildly.

Jebber walked to the top-left corner of the structure and cast *light* into the dark chamber, taking care to illuminate both visible opponents.

Lealani moved to a better position at the top of the hole and cast *daze* on one of the beasts, to no effect.

Rathan swung his heavy mace and crunched into the nearest metal dog.

"Son of a bitch!" Kolthak swung at the creature that bit him but missed. "Bastard!" He stepped behind the warforged to avoid a second, fatal chomp. "Laddy, I need a healer!"

The beast, sensing that Kolthak was wounded, moved quickly to attack, hitting with a vicious blow that nearly severs his leg. Kolthak fell where he stood, bleeding profusely. The other beast attacked Rathan this time and hit.

"Looks like I'll have to teach them some discipline! I'll smash one!" Shrapnel hit the metal dog that felled Kolthak. He reached over and touched Kolthak on the chest. His eyes immediately opened and he sucked in a great deal of breath before standing up.

"They are just regular constructs," Ilyra shouted to the rest of the group "Try magics that will work on that!" She cast *magic missile* at the dog threatening Kolthak. The magic slammed into the creatures body, obviously hurting it.

"What kind of magics work on constructs???" yelled Lealani.

"I know what does NOT work! Don't try to confuse them or affect their minds, because they have none. Something that dos right direct damage can work for sure."

Jebber cast *cure light wounds* and held on to it, hoping to get to Kolthak in time to help. Unfortunately, he slipped while climbing down the rope and fell to the floor below. Fortunately, he landed right next to Kolthak's unconscious form.

Lealani pulled out her bow and fired. Her arrow went wide, missing its target. Rathan attacked the beast in front of him and connected solidly!

The metal beast in front of Rathan attacked but missed. Shrapnel was not as lucky and the creature's teeth tore into him.

"Well this isn't going to be any fun." Shrapnel said as he drew a vial of oil, took a single step to the southeast, and attacked. His blow hurt the creature greatly. It looked as if one more solid hit would take it out.

Ilyra fired her crossbow but missed. Jebber reached out and healed Rathan before moving to get out of direct combat. Lealani again fired her bow but missed. Rathan missed as well.

Kolthak looked at his leg and the fact that he's standing again, then glanced at Jebber. "Thank ye lad! I hate to be inconvenient, but I could really use another one of whatever ye gave me." He turned back to the Iron Defender that chomped him and said "As for you ya tin-plated son of a bitch, have a bite of this!" Kolthak's axe buried itself deep in the creature's neck and it dropped to the ground.

The other creature attacks Rathan but misses. Shrapnel hurled himself at a dog, yelling "God I hope they didn't notice that! I've gotta look brave in front of the fleshies or else they might figure out that I'm not in full working order!" His blow bounces off the dog's hide.

Once again, Ilyra missed with her crossbow, cursing under her breath.

"Master Dwarf, I'm afraid that's all the Host has graced me with today," Jebber said as he moved to fire a shard at the remaining beast. His attack missed.

Lealani began to climb down the rope. As she did, Rathan swung one last time and connected with the beast, sending it to the ground. He put away his mace and lent a hand to Lealani as she climbed down the rope. "Watch your step, it is a bit rough down here."

She took his hand and let him help her down, having seen the final blow up close. "Thank you for the help Rathan. You felled that creature easily like a mighty warrior. But you are injured?" she asked.

"I was, but thankfully I got some healing help. I feel fine now. Perhaps we should both scout together in case there are any other surprises."

Lealani nodded, "I'm not certain how quiet you are but I will need light so that is probably for the best. Let's go together."

"I think it is reasonable to say that I will be much quieter than our metal friend there." Rathan said with a twinkle in his eye.

Lea smiled. "Yes, of that I am sure." Making sure there were two torches, one for the others and one for them, she said to the rest, "We will return shortly. Stay here and rest."

Jebber looked at the remaining group. "Friends, I propose we either make camp now, or proceed stealthily and retreat at any hints of trouble."

Lealani and Rathan ventured out. They had a torch and while not exactly quiet they try not to make too much noise. They scouted out the area, gathering information as they go.

Searching the area, they found something that no one noticed previously; each iron defender now had a metal rod that had popped out of its forehead. One rod was rectangular, the other triangular. They weren't sure if the iron defender that was currently buried under the collapsed roof also has a rod in its forehead. The shelves on the southern wall were mostly empty, though there were a number of objects wrapped in ancient oilcloth.

In the easternmost section of the room was a huge forge and furnace. It took up the easternmost 10 feet of the room. Directly in front of the forge lay metal tiles covering 10 feet of the floor. Three depressions, evenly spaced atop the forge, showed a pentagon, a triangle, and a square.

"Over here, Rathan, I think we may have found something. We'll need to get to that buried guardian too." Lealani pointed out all that was found and indicated she would spend a good amount of time on the shelves.

Rathan retrieved the rods from the defenders and set about to dig out the one under the debris. "Kolthak. Shrapnel. I need your help moving this stone." With all three of them lifting, they were able to move the stone that was covering the third metal dog. It, too, had rod in its forehead; this one was pentagonal in shape.

"Tula sinome Rathan," Lealani said. "Look what I found. None of it is magical but it will probably be helpful or at least we can sell it for gold to help with our adventure. I would suggest staying clear of the area by the forge, there is magics there that can injure."

She pointed out a suit of chain mail, a very nice chain shirt, three small steel shields, a heavy mace, a longword, a very nice rapier, a very nice heavy mace, and two sunrods. Lealani lifted the rapier and started twirling it around. "This looks like good quality, perhaps better than my own practice weapon."

Kolthak will moved over to take a look at the swag Lelani found and see if that nice chain shirt might fit him; he seemed rather disinterested in the rest of it.

Lealani made her way to Rathan, "Heruamin, My Lord can you tell if this is well made?" She held up the rapier for him to look over.

"It appears that you have found a fine blade, dear lady. Can you wield it effectively?" Rathan asked.

"Not as impressively as you can wield your weapon but I would say I'm passable. Care to find out?" she teased.

"Show me," Rathan said back.

The corner of Lealani's lip turned up into a mischievous grin and before he knew it Rathan had a rapier come swinging quickly towards him.

Rathan takes a step forward inside Lealani's arc and grabbed her wrist while pivoting to her inside. He stopped just inches from her face, her rapier pointed down toward the floor. Without warning, he leaned forward and kissed her softly. "Yes, I think you can handle it perfectly."

Lealani was caught surprised, and for a moment after the kiss she was lost in Rathan's deep brown and soulful eyes. However, this gave him a warning - suddenly her eyes flashed with fire and instead of her sword it was her hand that flew towards his face with speed and force.

Rathan used his other hand to block Lealani's slap just inches from his face. Seeing the fire in her eyes, he kissed her again then backed away with a smile on his face, "Yes, I believe you can handle things just perfectly."

Standing only a few feet away Rathan could still see the fire in her eyes as she considered the man standing in front of her. Years of training and interacting with all different races and kinds of people had never put her in front of someone so brazen and cocky as this human was to steal such a kiss, twice! Her grip tightened on her rapier as she sized him up, much larger than she but for certain her small frame made her quicker. She raised her rapier and pointed it at the man. "Uuma ma' ten' rashwe, ta tuluva a' lle," passion brewing in her voice. Repeating in common, "Don't look for trouble Rathan, for surely it will come to you." She waited, readied, for Rathan to make the first move.

Rathan walked directly toward her, the point of her rapier near his chest. "Vanimle sila tiri." With a simple gesture, he pushed the tip of her rapier away and walked toward her slowly, his eyes locked on hers. "You don't really want to use this on me, do you?"

Lealani looked up at Rathan, almost towering over her as he walked confidently close. "Quena i'lambe tel' Eldalie?" she asked, surprised he spoke Elvish, and let him push her weapon away. "Cormlle naa tanya tel'raa. To steal kisses as you did and to not back down from such a challenge. Lle lava and wish to reap the reward of such bravery?" The anger is gone from her eyes and replaced with the same mischief from earlier.

Rathan looked at her, confusion in his eyes for a moment. "I admit that I only know a little Elven. But I do recognize when I am in the presence of someone who is my better and could capture my heart if I am careless."

"Ah," recognizing he had no idea what she just said. "Perhaps you don't want to be careless with something so precious," she says, running a finger across his chest where his heart resides. "Or perhaps you do," she grinned slyly.

During all of this, Kolthak had taken it upon himself to study the forge more closely. He turned to the ladies. "Do either of you ladies have any experience dealing with magical traps? There seems to be a *shocking grasp* trap laid on the tiles and the forge."

Out of the corner of her eye Lealani noticed the dwarf now digging around in the rubble. She stepped closer to Rathan, her breath in his face, her scent surrounding him, "I am intrigued by you, brave warrior. Shall we continue this *conversation* later?"

"I look forward to *hearing* what you have to say, my lady. Let's go help our companion in the meantime, shall we?"

"Yes, we shall." She stood looking into his eyes a few long moments before she moved away with a grin. "Ai' atar," she called to Kolthak. "Have you retrieved the last piece from the guardian? We need it here," she points to the third hole. "Our brave warrior has the other two. If we each take one we can insert them and see what happens. But be warned, there is evocation magic here."

After climbing around a bit on top of the forge Lealani said, "The trap is centered on the three depressions on top of the forge here. I can't disable the magical trap but hopefully if we put the pieces in correctly it won't go off. Still, I suggest the not strong of body leave the area before we try."

Kolthak answers. "Fortunately, the trap only covers the metal floor plates and the forge itself, so anyone not standing on one of those should be safe. I would suggest we have one person place the rods so as to minimize the risks. Whoever volunteers should make sure they aren't wearing metal armor or the like before trying." Kolthak moved to make sure he wasn't standing on or right next to the affected areas.

Jebber piped up. "Might I suggest we recuperate before attempting something that will either bring us harm, or open a door into danger?"

Lealani looked at him. "You were all supposed to be resting while Rathan and I searched around for clues. We weren't going to be setting off traps or anything," she grinned, "Not on purpose. I suggest we keep with that plan but I'm open to other ideas."

Kolthak nodded. "Aye, rest and a chance to heal sound good. We should be fairly secure here, but we might want to have someone keep watch on the roof. If someone came on us unawares and cut the ropes we might have a hard time getting back out."

Looking at the door to the building, it was barred from the inside. They could also see that the lock to the door turns. It looked as if they could unlock the door and open it from this side.

Kolthak made his way out and up to the roof. He untied the ropes from their anchors and made his way back down and inside, locking the door behind him. "We might want to take an opportunity to rest before we venture further. Anyone else interested?"

## **Chapter 10: Mission Accomplished**

"Someone want to figure out a proper watch then? Rathan and I can take first unless it works out better a different way," Lealani asked as they made preparations to rest.

After a few minutes of arguing, watch order was decided and the night passed quickly. In the morning, Jebber healed everyone.

"Thank the Host, I feel much better today. Is everyone else ready to press on?" Kolthak took another look at the journal to see if it gave any info about the forge and the rods. It, of course, was still blank. Taking a chance, he assumed the order of the rod was triangle, square, pentagon.

As soon as the pentagon slid into place, he heard a loud \*click\* from behind the forge. He looked and saw that there was a small opening in the wall. Within the opening, they found a sack containing 100 silver pieces, a sack containing 100 gold pieces, four gold ingots, three blue potions, one red potion, an old map, and an adamantine plate shaped into a seven-pointed star. It was slightly more than six inches long from point to point, and was covered with strange engraved patterns.

Lealani picked up the star and look it over, "Is this some sort of key I wonder?" Her face lit up a few seconds later. "Ah, this is what the lady is searching for! Success! I wonder what kind of special metal these bars must be. Can anyone identify them?"

Jebber took the potions and stare at them for a few minutes. Eventually, he was able to determine that the blue potions were potions of cure moderate wounds and the red potion was a potion of mage armor. He then studied the coins. They were old, of that there was no doubt. If they found the right person to sell them to, they could get more than face value for them.

Kolthak took the map to study it. The old map showed a number of cryptic symbols spread throughout what appeared to be ancient depictions of the territory that were now divided between the Mournland and Darguun.

He then hefted the seven-pointed star. "I think we've explored this whole area, so are we ready to return this to Lady d'Cannith?"

Lealani answered. "I guess there is no reason to stay here further, we've found what we need, right? Maybe we could make a copy of this map though, in case of trouble. Is anyone good at that?"

"Or perhaps we can keep the map, as I don't think she asked about it," said Kolthak.

Rathan said, "Before we leave, if no one objects, I'd like to switch into that suit of chain mail. It will give me better armor than this studded leather."

"That sounds like an excellent idea, Rathan," said Kolthak.

"We're all patched up & ready to go? Let's go see what kind of welcoming committee that last flying orb brought back," said Jebber.

Rathan opened the door leading out. "Hopefully there are no more surprises."

As they emerged from the foundry, a flaming crossbow bolt streaked from the rubble surrounding the large stone column. "Weakflesh!" a powerful voice called out from that direction. "Now you face Saber, greatest of the devoted followers of the Lord of Blades. Throw down the schema and walk away. This day does not have to end with your blood on my hands." They could see a warforged in the shadows, its crossbow loaded with another bolt.

"Hah, my real allies have finally shown themselves! Good riddance to all these poor soft fleshies and their porous exoskeletons. They would never suspect that I, this poor damaged warforged, was in reality the Lord of Blades! Mwahahaha!" Shrapnel yelled, standing towards the back applying generous vials of repair light wounds salve even as the crossbow bolt goes flying by.

"I seriously hope it's your malfunction making you seem as if you would stab us in the back, warforged" Lealani said in a fiery tone. "As while you have fought with us your words show us no honor or loyalty."

"After all this trouble you send after us do you honestly think we'd just leave it to you? It must be of much value. No, you're going to have to take it from us and it won't be easy you Nadorhuan," she then yelled at the warforged in the shadows.

Shrapnel began to make strange hand gestures and a shrug followed by, "What is she talking about this time? I didn't say anything! Wait! She must be reading my mind... or my circuits... or whatever! She's a witch! A WITCH!"

The warforged in the shadow yelled at Shrapnel, "You rust covered bucket of bolts! Anyone who helps the fleshies like you have will die by my hand!"

It then turned its attention to Lealani. "How dare you talk about my master that way, you elven witch! You are nothing compared to Him and the great quest he longs to fulfill!"

"Another damned warforged! I've got nothing against this Lord of Blades, but he is seriously starting to piss me off," cursed Rathan.

"You speak in the tongue of one that is truly useless, fleshbag. If you are to speak to me, speak to me clearly and concisely," answered the warforged.

Kolthak whispered softly, "Well lad, I guess that answers the question of what that winged globe would conjure up."

Then he spoke to the warforged. "You misbegotten rustbucket! Your behavior shows you're just like your so-called fleshies; you're little more than a cowardly, thieving cultist!"

Lealani laughed. "I called you a *cowardly dog* which seems just about correct. I'll make sure to hold onto that star extra tightly then in case you decide to be a hero."

With the enemy's attention focused on Lealani, Kolthak makes a move to flank the warforged. The warforged is keen to this and lets loose a flaming bolt which pierces Kolthak's leg!

Lealani moves up and casts *color spray*! She covers the warforged in a rainbow of color. He looks directly at her and says, "Is that all you have, fleshbag? You'll have to do better than that."

Rathan moved up to protect Lealani.

Jebber moves around a large pile of rubble, trying to stay under cover and fire off a shard at the warforged. He misses. Ilyra follows him and lets loose a *ray of enfeeblement*, which hits him and saps his strength.

Kolthak stepped up and used a potion of *cure moderate wounds*.

The warforged stepped up to Lealani. "Let me show you how a real warrior does things," he said as he swung his longsword. Apparently, he wasn't a *real* warrior because he missed horribly.

Lealani laughed at his miss and stepped back to cast *color spray* again. The warforged screeched and dropped his sword. His hands flew to his eyes. "You've blinded me, you bitch! I'll kill you!"

"You'll have to find me first," she said coolly.

Rathan stepped up and hit the warforged hard with his longsword. "Take that you iron bastard!"

"So he doesn't believe I am who I am? What a fool! I guess I'll have to punish him for his amazing credulousness." Shrapnel moved up and slammed the stunned warforged upside the head.

Jebber moved and missed with his crossbow. Ilyra let loose a magic missile, hitting the enemy squarely.

Kolthak cast *swift expeditious retreat* and circled around behind the enemy, setting up a flank with Shrapnel. "Take this ya tin-plated bastard!" he said as he connected with his axe. The warforged's head flew off. Immediately thereafter, a small orb detached itself from the forged, sprouted wings, and headed off down a tunnel.

Kolthak let out a yell and kicked the head to see how far he can get it. "Rust in parts ya bastard!"

"Good shot, Kolthak. Why do warforged have it out for us?" Rathan turned to Shrapnel. "Can we trust you or not, mister Lord of the Blades?"

"He's a witch too! What do I do? What do I do? AHHHHH! I've got to stay calm. I have to think calm thoughts! NO - WAIT! THEY'RE STILL READING MY MIND! Even in my own head

I'm not safe? What should I do? Run? Play dead? Fight for my life? Oh, I know... I'll sprout one of those stupid wingy things that keep popping out of the other 'forged. That will fix this! Now... how do I do that?"

"Wait... maybe if I can convince myself that I'm not really the lord of blades, then they'll believe me. I mean, I don't have any blades... or even sharp pointy things... well... besides my head..."

"Yes... it's working! I almost don't think I believe myself! Why I almost don't think I thought that thought at all... I think."

Rathan looked up at Shrapnel, "You are truly a broken warforged. If you betray us, I will personally cut your head from your body." Rathan then turned toward Kolthak. "Is that longsword anything special?"

"It's working! I'm almost not think I'm thinking at all!" Shrapnel said to no one in particular.

Lealani shook her head. "May my ancestors grant me the patience to make it to the surface in the company of this one. We might have to force him to get fixed when we return there!"

"It appears to be magical, but not strongly so. A nice enough weapon..for a sword." Kolthak looked at the rest of the group. "Would anyone be interested in this crossbow? And shall we head back to the surface?"

"A magical sword could be a good thing. If no one minds, I can make use of it," queries Rathan.

"I think you are the only one who wields a sword, so you should have it," said Lealani. "I do not need the crossbow Ai'atar, I don't know how to use it. We have the other items we found also, we should not forget."

Jebber piped up, "Let us leave this place. I would stand beneath the sky again."

The group quietly made their way back to the surface world, unsure of what would happen once they were up there.