

## Tales of Old Volume 1: The Frigid North

~Excerpt from Chapter 1~

*There would be a day when the pain would pass. A day when the memories would fade. A day when that deep pit in the center of his chest would cease to ache and burn with the memories of what was, the hopelessness of what is, and longing for what would never be. That is what he had been promised when he woke for the first time in a decade to a sunlit sky. Perhaps the promise had not come in so many words, but it had been said that someday this pain would pass... it would pass. Every dawn from that day forward he had ensured his own rising came before that of the sun. He watched and waited as dawn broke; praying for the day when that promise would be proven true. But it hadn't, not yet. So he adhered to another piece of advice he had received on that day. "Keep your hands busy and your thoughts buried. Avoid the pain. Put it to work towards something useful." Something useful. Six years of finding something useful and then finally, for the first time in all that time, when the sun rose, his bright grey eyes did not trace its path across the sky.*

### **Chapter 1: Of Dwarf and Spear and Snow Strewn Trail**

Pale light slowly seeped into the frozen world. It climbed laboriously over the sheer jagged eastern walls that were thrust like bared white teeth out of the depths of the frozen world, as if in an attempt to gouge the sky. No startling display of contrasting color erupted across the landscape with the coming of dawn; whatever painter that might think to immortalize this scene would only need to utilize pale colors for his brush. The dawn's light spread lethargically across sharp ridges, which would have been lost high above the clouds on a less clear day. Morning crept down into deep crevasses between; the depths of which even the most direct light rarely reached. Ice unwavering, refused to thaw with the new day's sun, as it clung in great white-blue sheets to even the most exposed faces of the high mountain range.

Tumultuously, the barren and frozen land fell away until at last the first flecks of green could be espied peering half entombed out from under the layers of snow. Steeply the world continued to fall away, gradually revealing one resilient half submerged sign of life after another until the rockery cascaded downward in great sheer faces. At the base, grew in earnest, a sea of snow-capped green.

The day's light spread steadily out across this unbroken canopy that promised an emerald hue were it not smothered by the grip of frozen white fingers clinging to every branch and hanging from every bough. The blanketed forest raced onward in all directions until it met, in the far-off south and west, by dual arms of the same mountain range over which the sun so laboriously climbed. To the north the forest thinned, giving way to frozen tundra and rolling hills that stretched on until meeting abruptly a plain of ice, under which was submerged the Frigid Sea.

Deep within the endless forest, a tall hooded figure crouched low to the snow strewn ground. His face obscured by the long shadows cast from the hood he wore pulled low against the cold. As motionless as the frozen world around him, he stood, broad shoulders supporting a heavy pack.

One long-fingered hand moved absentmindedly back and forth across the worn hilt of a sheathed sword. He worked the leather of his glove over the metal surface by memory, knowing where each impurity lay. His booted feet stood unevenly, one planted in the muddy snow, the other atop a rotting log. The figure's free hand rested on his bent knee, slowly clenching and unclenching against the cold. The only part of the figure that moved with any speed were his eyes, which scanned the ground tirelessly and at great speed. His gaze flicked forward and back, left and right, moving from mark to indistinguishable mark in the muddied snow.