Faldun (working title)

Waking up, Tim slowly raised his body up from his hay stuffed bed. It was still dark inside of his small house but he hardly noticed nor did he notice the aching in every muscle as he moved, every day was the same thing. Waking up before the sun broke above the horizon to begin another day of tending to the barons land with all the other peasants in the shanty town they lived in. Today Tim had the misfortune to be part of the group sent to work in the barons’ mine, digging further and further down into the depths of a mountain in search of any gemstones they could find and all the raw ore that could be sent up.

The mine was set up at the base of mount Sabbath, part of the black mountains stretching hundreds, maybe thousands of kilometers along the northern border. The mine itself was positioned next to a river flowing from an underground spring fed from deep under the mountain range and provided the camp with a means to prepare the ore for sale as well as giving the men working in the depths a chance to cool off at the end of the day. The village, centered around the outside of the barons mansion, was a fair distance away from the mine and the rotating job system meant that every couple weeks Tim had to awaken even before the farmers to join the others in the long walk there.

The sun was just beginning to peak over the horizon when the mine came into view and just a short while later they had finally made it to the mine where they were greeted by the previous team who were just finishing up for the night and happily greeted the team who would take over the back breaking work and give them a chance to see their families again. A brief discussion between the shift captains and orders began to be passed out to the men. Tim was paired with his friend Jack to work in turns, one swinging the pick, breaking apart the rock and the other shoveling the debris into makeshift sleds to be dragged out by another team to the surface where they could be sorted and checked for materials. The monotony of the work was lessened by the freedom to talk and joke with each other, switching positions anytime they began to lose the strength to swing the pick.

A week in and several meters deeper Tim and Jack were rotated out to the wash team on the surface. Although not as physically demanding as mining working in the blazing sun day after day looking for the tiniest glint of something valuable was its own hell. Taking one bucket full of the coarse dirt at a time Tim began to notice that the soil contained less and less rocky material and had begun to resemble a thick top soil; although uncommon it did happen that a mining team hit a pocket of earth amongst the rock and clay. As he grabbed another bucket from the pile he had already written off the section as wasted time digging and sorting and began to grab a scoop from another section when he saw a thin, long rock poking up out of the soil and without thinking he grabbed it out of the pile.

Upon lifting the rock out Tim realized it was much larger than he had originally thought and gave off a slight sparkle when tilted facing it to the sun. The sparkle was enough to convince Tim to take it the several steps down to the river and rinse of the layer of mud that clung to most of it only revealing the corner and patches of stone underneath. Holding the stone under water and working at it pieces of mud began to fall off and reveal the true shape and size of the object, revealing it to have rounded corners and straight edges. As the last of the mud came off Tim could just make out indentations around the edges of the stone and since finding it he began wondering if all of this could just be natural or if it had been created by the hand of man.

Just as he began to feel a sinking feeling of despair in the pit of his stomach as he stared more intensely at the tablet he was jolted back by the gruff voice of the wash plant overseer doing rounds checking on peoples finds. Upon seeing a glint off of the tablet the overseer rushed over to Tim’s station and asked him to come back up the incline from the edge of the river to the wash tables in hopes of a big find that would get him time off and a bonus. Tim handed him the tablet, feeling almost relieved that it was away from him, and the overseer began to closely examine the tablet, more interested in what it was made of than what was on it. After several minutes of scrutinizing every inch of it he tossed it back on to the wash table dismissing it as pyrite, a sparkly yellowish mineral that served to purpose and wasn’t worth the cost to process and sell it, and walked off continuing his checks on other people’s progress.

Despite the overseer dismissing the tablet as a useless rock Tim decided to hold onto it and that night after the day shift had ended he went to talk to Jack to see if he knew anything about why it gave the impression of being man-made. With some jokes made at his expense about collecting rocks Tim convinced Jack to take a look at the tablet. Although skeptical that it wasn’t just a natural oddity Jack looked over it but it wasn’t until as he was putting it down he ran his hand over the surface and could feel very slight grooves in the surface that felt almost as if they could be some form of symbols or glyphs that had almost completely been worn away.