

Chapter 1

David

David, the oldest son of the leader of Thromp Evenski, a small collection of moldering homes near the coast of Torvail, lay on a hill just outside of Evenski with his oldest friend Isabell, looking at the different cloud shapes overhead. David and Isabell often went to this hill during the warmer months to get away from their chores, much to the protest of their mothers. This hill was one of the most scenic hills in all of Torvail according to David, who had never been outside of Evenski and the surrounding area. It truly was beautiful, from its top you could see the ocean, an ancient forest, and all of Evenski. In times long past this hill was known as Lover's Luck, now it was simply known as Evenski Hill.

"That one looks like a dragon!" Said David, pointing at a long serpent-like cloud.

"And how would you know what a dragon looks like? You haven't even seen anything more exotic than an Owlbear!" Isabell replied jokingly.

"For your information, I have read books that talk about what the dragons of old looked like and that cloud looks exactly like what the books describe." David responded, slightly annoyed.

"You know that dragons aren't real, right? They are just a myth written in ancient books to scare little children into not wandering too far from home." Isabell said.

"I know they aren't real but imagine if they were! Imagine their beauty as they soar across the sky! Imagine th-" David started.

"Imagine them ripping you to shreds then breathing fire on Evenski." Isabell interrupted.

"Okay I get it," said David, "dragons are dumb, and I shouldn't waste my time thinking about them."

"Exactly, you have better things to worry about David. Your dad isn't going to be able to run Evenski forever. Someday you are going to have to step up and take his place, like he did for his father, and his father did for his father, and so on back to the beginning of Thromp Evenski. You were meant to do so since your father gave you the family name! You are David son of David, future leader of Evenski! You need to realize that that responsibility is greater than you, or I, or anyone else in Evenski. You are the future of our people." Isabell told David.

"But don't you ever want to leave Evenski and explore the greater world around us? Don't you ever long to be somewhere else, meet new people, see the great city of Newwiter, do anything other than stay in Evenski?" David asked.

“David, you are so incredibly special. You have a mind that craves adventure, but you can’t let that cause you to leave Evenski. What if your father died while you were away, who would run Evenski? What if you died while away? You need to stay here. Evenski is your home. It’s our home.” Isabell said as she scooted closer to David.

David put his arm on the ground to help himself up. “Well,” he said while standing, “I guess we should probably get back. It’s getting dark and I don’t want Lin to yell at me for keeping you out so late again.”

“My mom has never yelled at you!” Isabell said reproachfully. “She has just loudly expressed her displeasure with you keeping me out at night when it gets dangerous.” She finished jokingly.

With that the pair walked down Evenski Hill hand in hand toward the homes of their families, talking all the way. As they approached the newly repaired log wall David thought that he knew he was meant for something greater than leading Evenski. He knew that something had been calling for him to find it ever since he was born. Something far outside Thromp Evenski.

David and Isabell entered Evenski just as the sun began to set over the ocean. David walked Isabell to her home and started to walk to his home. As he approached the nicest looking home in Evenski his mind wandered as he thought back to dragons. He knows they exist even if people say otherwise. He knows that their hoards still lie deep in the mountains waiting for someone to find them. He could not believe that they were just stories meant to warn children, they had to be real!

David entered the front door of his home and was immediately greeted by his youngest sibling, Leif. Leif and David are the only boys of the family. They have six sisters, three older than David and three younger than David. Because of this Leif spent as much time around David as possible.

“Do anything fun today, David?” Leif asked.

“Just the usual Leif. How about you?” David asked.

“You know, just chores and some schooling by Stacy.” Leif replied.

Stacy was the eldest child in David’s family. She is 5 years older than David, runs the small school house for the young children, and is married to the town miller Timothy. She was easily the brightest of all of Davids family and easily picked up new information. Her home is filled with books she bought from the wandering traders that ended up in Evenski from time to time.

“What did Stacy teach you today?” David asked.

“Today we learned about history.” Leif said.

“I see. Learn anything good, or just more of what you knew?” David asked.

“More of what I knew. Dad wanted to see you by the way.” Leif said.

“What?” David asked.

“Yeah, he told me to send you to him as soon as you came home.” Leif answered.

“Did he seem mad at all?” David asked.

“No more than usual, but you should probably go see him sooner than later.” Leif replied.

With that David went up the stairs to his parents room, every step fearing some reprimand from his father for slacking on his chores yet again. He could hear his father in his mind as he walked up the stairs *You need to be more mature. You can't keep squandering your duties to this family! Someday you are going to be running Evenski, and you can't shirk your responsibilities then!* David had heard that speech, or variations thereof, countless times from his father. When he was younger David would, foolishly, tell his father that he didn't want to lead Evenski, or even live in Evenski after he grew up. It was a few years ago that David learned he shouldn't say that, even if he truly wanted to leave Evenski. He knew his father wanted the best for David and Evenski, but David couldn't shake the feeling that something called to him from outside in the foreboding wilderness.

David knocked on the door and heard his father say, “Come in.”

David entered and said, “You wanted to see me dad.”

“Yes, I did. Sit down please.” Came his fathers reply. “How was your evening with Isabell?”

This shocked David, his father never asked about what he and Isabell did. “It was good. We went to Evenski Hill and talked for a bit.”

“Good, good. I have been thinking that its time for you to have some more responsibilities with Evenski. My father gave me more responsibilities when I was around your age, and I think it's time you started to learn about running Evenski. Starting tomorrow you are going to be in charge of making sure we have enough food stocked for the coming freeze. Thomas is predicting its going to start early this year, and even though I don't trust his magic, he has never been wrong before.”

Thomas was the town Druid. He was an ancient half human half elf that helped make sure Evenski was always prepared for the cold months. He also doubled as the town healer and helped crops grow.

David wasn't sure how he felt about this development. Making sure the town had enough food for the freeze wasn't exactly a beginner responsibility and he didn't know if he was up for the task. On the other hand, this showed David that his dad trusted him with the wellbeing of Evenski.

“Well, boy? What do you think?” David's father asked.

“I'm honored dad. I won't let you or Evenski down.” Came Davids reply.

“Good. Make sure you are fast and do a good job counting. If our crops didn't do as well this year, then we need time to buy what we need from the merchant caravans. Now I'm busy, go see if your mom has any chores she needs you to do.” His dad told him.

As David left the upstairs he was conflicted. He did feel honored about this new responsibility he had. This told him that he does want to run Evenski after his Father retires, but at the same time he felt that if he didn't explore and try to find that something that called to him he would regret it for the rest of his life. Luckily, he had a few more years to figure out his feelings. Right now, he needed to prepare himself for tomorrow.

"David dear, the basin is empty, can you go get some more water?" His mother, Stephany, asked as he entered the kitchen.

"Yeah" David said grabbing the water yolk and placing it over his shoulders.

David awoke the next day before dawn to meet his father at the store house. Quickly getting dressed he hastily scribbled a note to Isabell that he was going to be at the store house and that she should meet him there at noon. He grabbed some bread, cheese, and a cured sausage to eat as he walked outside.

The morning had a nip in the air despite it still being the warmer months. Dew lay on the grass and made the paths slightly muddy. Even though it was still fairly dark David knew the way to the store house having lived in Evenski all his life. As he approached he saw his dad standing at the door talking with Thomas. They stopped talking as they saw David.

"Hello there David." Thomas said, "Your father tells me that you are going to be making sure we don't starve to death this winter!"

"That's the hope" David replied.

"Well, I have been helping your father, and his father, and even his grandfather make sure that doesn't happen. We have only ever had to buy from the caravans a handful of times and often even sell our surplus to them. But this job is still direly important. I hope you are up to the task." Thomas said.

"He is Thomas." Davids father said. "Now David, I'm not expecting you to get this all done today, but I do want you to finish the counting before the festival next week. Do you think you can do that?"

The Star Moon festival marked the transition from the warm months to the cold months. It was held every year when the brightest star, Decaldos, was positioned directly above the moon. During this festival the people of Evenski celebrated the death of the season by burning a straw man that resembled the warm months.

"Yes father." Was Davids reply.

"Good, I have lots of work today, so I'll see you at home for dinner. If you have questions, ask Thomas. He'll help you." David's father said with a nod towards Thomas. Davids father left and Thomas opened the store house doors, beckoning David inside.

“So, your father tells me that you often have your mind on the stories found in the old books.” Thomas said a few hours after David started counting and sorting the stored food, breaking the silence that had fallen on the pair.

“Yeah,” David replied, “I just think that they are cool!”

“From what your father tells me you don’t just think they are cool, you think that the stories are true.” Thomas said.

Great, David thought now Thomas is gonna tell me to stop believing in them too. “Um, yeah, I do think they are true. At least some of them.” David said.

“What if I told you that they are true? Or, at least, were true?” Thomas asked.

David looked around the salted ham he was behind to look at Thomas. A smile had spread across Thomas’s face and David couldn’t tell if Thomas was just playing with him or he actually meant it. “What do you mean?” David asked.

“The stories boy! Dragons, ancient hordes of treasure, fantastical beasts! They all existed and may still exist to this day!” Thomas said.

“You just playing with me aren’t you! I get it, ‘Let’s all make fun of someone who thinks there is more out there’. It’s not very funny though.” David said angrily.

“Now is that really how you should be treating someone that just told you that everything you’ve read but told wasn’t real, is, in fact, real? Honestly boy, I thought you had brains.” Thomas said, smiling broader.

“You’re not joking them? How do you know that its real?” David asked.

“When you get to be my age, you’ve seen a thing or two! When I was younger, much much younger, I belonged to a druidic circle. We studied how the sun influences the growth of plants. One of my jobs was to find plants from all over Torvail so we could study it. In my travels I came across something odd, a skeleton of a massive creature. A skeleton of a dragon.” Thomas said.

At this David nearly dropped the paper he was marking inventory on. “You’re joking, aren’t you?” He asked.

“No boy, I’m not. The skeleton was about 12 feet long and had a wingspan of 15 feet. It’s skull was massive and its teeth still razor sharp. As I was looking at the dead beast I could feel its spirit still lived in the area. I could sense that I needed to leave my circle and walk north until I found a collection of homes. I was to live there and offer up my services as a druid. I obeyed. I didn’t question why the beasts spirit told me to do so, I just knew that if a creature that was so innately magical told me to do something, I had better do so.” Thomas told David.

David stared at Thomas in utter shock. Forgetting that the paper was in his hand he dropped it onto the ground.

“Before I left I did take something from the beast. I took one of its teeth.” Thomas said as he pulled on one of his necklace chains that held a long, slender, tooth on it, hidden behind his shirt. “I took this tooth and walked north for five days. On my journey I passed by ruined cities and met a jester of all people! Finally I found Thromp Evenski. During that time Your great grandfather was leader. I showed him my talents for influencing plant growth and was immediately welcomed into Evenski. I’ve been here ever since, waiting for someone else I can share this story with.” Thomas said, looking at David.

“You have to tell me more! This news is amazing! I don’t even know what to feel!” David said.

“Not yet boy, I promise I will tell you more though! Just not today. Today you have work to do!” Thomas said.

With that, David begrudgingly went back to work, thinking about finding a dragon skeleton or exploring the dark forests one day.

After a full day of counting the provisions and a quick lunch with Isabell to tell her about his new job, David walked home in the twilight. As he walked he thought about everything that was revealed to him today by Thomas. *Thomas didn’t seem like he was lying to me when he told me about how dragons existed at some point. But he also is an old man, so he might just be delusional. But he did have that fang and my father, grandfather, great grandfather, and the entire thromp trust him. Was he just pulling my leg? Was that an actual dragons tooth or just the tooth of some other animal in Torvail?*

David decided that Thomas was just having some fun with him. Now that he thought about it, that is exactly what he expected from Thomas. After all, didn’t his dad tell him that people that practiced magic often had to sacrifice their sanity in order to do so. Maybe Thomas is just a little insane. David reached his home and walked in to have dinner with his family.