

KRAGOR GRIMSTRIDE

I AM KRAGOR GRIMSTRIDE, ORPHAN of Bladegarden. My parents were proud orcs of the Righteous Brand who gave their lives defending their city. Or, so I was told, although I have also heard whispers of betrayals. Either way, I was left a homeless orphan at the age of five. Though I long to discover the truth about my parents, my life has consisted of little more than the struggle to survive.

I was weaker and dumber than the tyrannical bullies who ruled the streets. By deception, speed, stealth, and a silver tongue I survived until adulthood. I don't know why... maybe merely by chance... some presence... some thing... from outside our realm took an interest in me and began whispering in my dreams—words and images that I could not understand. For months these dreams plagued me, until my darkest hour. One night I was caught unawares by a gang of thugs. I struggled to fend them off but was brought close to death. Feeble and desperate, despising my own weakness, my will to live was as strong as ever. I screamed into the void and surrendered to whatever it was that had been watching me. It filled me with power and I overcame the attackers, killing some and routing the others.

Since then dream visions have continued to haunt my slumber and reveal the depth of my awakened abilities. With my war hammer raised and eldritch energy crackling at my fingertips, I have fought against the tyrants at every opportunity, protecting those they sought to exploit.

Gradually, my dreams began to make some sense— as a command and as a promise for greater power. “Go north. Cross the frozen north. To Eiselcross.” The purpose remained veiled, but my resolve was absolute. I would follow.

I traveled six weeks winding through Bladegarden, Hupperdook, Nogvugrot, and

Yrrosa, until Icehaven emerged from the frost. A Righteous Brand veteran now seeking his own fortune was a tale that opened purses and secured passage. Merchants, traders, wandering groups paid for my protection, though my true purpose was survival. Traveling alone meant certain death. Joining caravans and groups was a matter of strategic necessity.

Dangerous encounters were rare, but not nonexistent. Most challenges I met with cunning and bluff, my war hammer a sufficient deterrent. But when serious threats pressed—moments that demanded more than just smashing some heads— I would resort to my eldritch powers, breaking the careful illusion of a simple veteran soldier. Sometimes those who witnessed this would withdraw, recognizing I was something else entirely, leaving me to continue my calculated journey north on my own.

Once I reached Icehaven I made bargain with the first captain who would take me. The rest you know as we all met on board the *Frostwind* on our way to Palebank Village.

