

# PROLOGUE

**T**HE SALT SPRAY STINGS YOUR FACES as the longship grinds against the icy pier of Palebank Village. The groan of splintering ice mixes with the cries of gulls and the shouts of dockworkers bundled in furs. Palebank Village greets you with a blast of frigid air, a stark contrast to the relative warmth of the southern seas you've left behind. The sky above is a perpetual gray, heavy with the promise of more snow.

You've endured weeks at sea, braving treacherous currents and icy squalls aboard the *Frostwind*, a sturdy, if somewhat cramped, longship captained by a weathered and taciturn dwarf. The journey itself proved more than just a test of sea legs; it was during those long, monotonous days and nights that your paths first crossed. Over shared meals of salted fish and hardtack, huddled around the meager warmth of the ship's brazier, you discovered a shared purpose beneath your disparate backgrounds. Perhaps it was a whispered conversation overheard in the galley, a chance encounter on deck under the pale moonlight, or a late-night debate in the cramped crew quarters, but you each realized you were drawn north by the same alluring whispers: the rediscovery of Aeorian ruins, remnants of a lost civilization swallowed by the Frostfell. Tales of lost cities and powerful artifacts have spread like wildfire, carried on the winds and traded in taverns from the Menagerie Coast to the shores of Wildemount. These stories have lured explorers, scholars, and fortune-seekers alike to this desolate land, and fate, or perhaps something more, has brought you together on this shared voyage.

Palebank Village, a ramshackle collection of wooden buildings huddled against the harsh landscape, serves as the primary gateway to the frozen Islands of Eiselcross to the North. Here, amidst the bustle of fur traders, fisherfolk, grizzled explorers, shady mercenaries, and hopeful fortune-seekers, you disembark.

The air is thick with anticipation, a palpable sense of excitement mixed with a healthy dose of apprehension. The promise of uncovering lost knowledge, powerful magic, and perhaps even unimaginable wealth hangs heavy in the air, a beacon in this frozen wilderness. But the frozen shores of Eiselcross hold many secrets, and the ruins of Aeor are guarded by more than just ice and snow. Ancient dangers stir beneath the frozen surface, and the secrets you seek may come at a terrible price. Your journey into the heart of Eiselcross begins now, the moment your boots touch the frozen ground.