

Handout 5 Bartoz's Letter

Whoever finds this...

I am not ashamed that I'm running. I am no hero. That was my grandfather and it ground him down anyway. That is why he had his warhammer turned into a smith's hammer.

I do not know what's going to happen. I feel like a red moon's rising. But I cannot run until I leave word so someone knows what happened.

The priest Wulfram had this dagger that some soldier found in a tomb in the woods. Sunderland clans buried their dead all over these hills. But that dagger was too fine for Sunderland barbarians and it looked newly forged. The steel was Zethinian. Those Imperials tried to conquer this land centuries ago. But it did not take. I remember something about a war and a traitor and a jeweled dagger, but I can't remember it all. My dad had the head for stories. I just worked the bellows while he yammered away.

But I know my steel and I know my gems. Serpent stones they were in the hilt. Green and white and bad luck. I didn't like anything about it. Either it is a thing of evil or it's stolen from the dead. No good in either case. I told Wulfram I would throw it in my furnace and let the fire turn it to dross. But he wanted to look into it. Send it to his brothers.

Now he is gone. Arpaad's saying he sent the priest back to Blackwater Bridge to bring that dead soldier's things back to his family, but I know that's not true. Arpaad would never send anyone traveling before the winter broke. Wulfram would never travel before the winter broke. And no one would travel anywhere without coming to me for supplies.

I told the Marshal I thought the whole thing stank. Told him about the dagger, too. The Marshal's always given every man a fair listen. And he said he would get to the bottom of it. He had this hard look in his eye, and he strapped on his sword...