

Flames in the Night Sky and the screams of dying men and women: these are the memories which linger in your mind as you contemplate your fate from the bowels of the dungeon cell. It was but a fortnight ago when your small village was attacked by the hideous minions of Darg, the Firemaster. If only the village elders had heeded the prophesy of Vladorf the Wise and armed themselves against the encroaching hoard that now overruns the land of Divesia, perhaps your family and friends might still be alive.

The signs were clear enough in retrospect: first came the ominous fiery veils of light in the evening skies; sudden snowstorms and gales well past the vernal equinox; tremors in the ground; and rivers that reversed their courses. The crops were pounded by hail, then withered as if from great drought the next day. The fishermen's nets were filled with strangely twisted fish whose flesh was unwholesome, and brought madness to those who ate of it. Then the huntsmen returned with tales of wild animals gone mad: gigantic toads the size of wolves; swarms of winged spiders and scorpions; and raptor birds garbed in feathers that seemed to burn with a terrible, unquenchable fire. One farmer on the outlands had told that the earth rejected the bodies of the dead, and cast them from their graves to wander as immaterial wraiths. The very land itself seemed gripped by delirium, and a great lamentation arose from the people.

The villagers petitioned their elders for guidance, but none could fathom these dire omens. Some asserted that the people had strayed from the teachings of the Old Ones, while others averred that the Old Ones warred amongst themselves. Reports that the Giants had awoken from their age-old slumber to renew their pacts with the race of men served only to further confound the elders. They could only agree that all the other villages should be gathered to form one council, as tradition demanded. They chose the four swiftest runners to bear the urgent declarations to the four corners of the land, but none were heard from again.

In panic the elders recalled the prophesy of Vladorf the Wise, who foretold that when the land went mad, only a single brave warrior armed with the marvelous Bow of Many Arrows could restore the balance, and then only with the assistance of the Forgotten Magi. Your father was known to be the greatest archer in the village, and so he was chosen to bear this great honor. It was retrieved from the sacred vaults and given to his keeping.

But as night fell on the village that same day, a strange and hideous army stormed the village. Warriors with ashen countenance and baleful gaze, whose very souls seemed burned from their hearts, attacked and brutalized the good people. Invisible Fire Giants, whose only trace was the scorched footprints where they trod the soil, smashed the gates of the village. Huge fire elementals swirled on vortices of malefic flame, engulfing the huts and

barns in awful conflagration. Though your father slew scores of Darg's minions with the Bow of Many Arrows, in the end you were both overcome and taken as prisoners of the foul hoard.

Now you find yourself in a dank cell, with your father mortally wounded. You have only your untested valor with the Bow and a fervent hope that the promise of aid foretold by Vladorf the Wise was more than just a legend.

In the dim light of the cell, your father's frail voice whispers to you...